

# JUDAISM

JUL 30 1974

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE LIBRARY  
Pasadena, California

## AFTER THE YOM KIPPUR WAR— CHANGES IN ISRAEL AND THE DIASPORA

Efraim Shmueli

## HESCHEL AND HIS CRITICS

Sol Tanenzapf

## ALIENATION AND JEWISH JESUS FREAKS

Moshe Adler

## ALEXANDRE DUMAS *Fils*—ZIONIST

Benjamin Szold Levin

SUE No. 91 / VOLUME 23 / NUMBER 3 / \$2.25

**SUMMER 1974**

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

LICENCED TO UNL.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## STATEMENT OF SPONSORSHIP

The American Jewish Congress is sponsoring the publication of JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF JEWISH LIFE AND THOUGHT as part of its basic policy "to stimulate an informed awareness of Jewish affairs, encourage Jewish scholarship and adequate opportunities for Jewish education, and generally foster the affirmation of Jewish religious, cultural, and historic identity."

JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

The Board of Editors, composed of distinguished scholars and thinkers drawn from every segment of Jewish life, is vested with full authority and responsibility for the contents of this Journal. Views and opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the American Jewish Congress, which is sponsoring the publication of this Journal as a service to the American Jewish community and to all who seek to understand the nature of the Jewish tradition and its modern significance.

*American Jewish Congress*

JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL is published by the American Jewish Congress. It appears in January, April, July, and October. Office of Publication: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Re-entered as second-class matter at Post Office, New York City, N.Y. Subscription in the United States and Canada, \$8.00 for one year, \$14.00 for two years, \$19.00 for three years; foreign subscription, \$9.00. Special rate for bulk (10 or more) and student subscriptions, \$5.00. Single issue, \$2.25; single issue abroad, \$2.50. Make checks payable to the order of JUDAISM, and send to: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. A month's notice must be given of any change of address.

US ISSN 0022-5762

The Board of Editors invites articles, communications, comments and discussion for publication. Address: Editors, JUDAISM, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Copyright © 1974 by the American Jewish Congress.



# JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Issue 91 / Volume 23 / Number 3 / Summer 1974

<i>First Reader</i>	R. G.	259
<i>Israel, Galut and Zionism: The Changed Scene</i>	EFRAIM SHMUELI	264
<i>Abraham Heschel and His Critics</i>	SOL TANENZAPF	276
<i>Alienation and Jewish Jesus Freaks</i>	MOSHE ADLER	287
<i>God and Man In Judaism: A Reform Perspective</i>	EUGENE B. BOROWITZ	298
<i>Reform Judaism: Evolution and The Stork</i>	NORMAN MIRSKY	309
<i>The Doctrine of Separation</i>	SOL ROTH	318
<i>Shavuot, "Matan Torah," and The Triennial Cycle</i>	BRUCE H. CHARNOV	332
<i>The Musar Movement and Psychotherapy</i>	ARNOLD RACHLIS	337
<i>Avram Uri Kovner: A Search for Acceptance</i> (Translation by Claire B. Shapiro)	SAUL M. GINSBURG	346
<i>Prophet of The Lord: Dumas Fils' Vision of Israel</i>	BENJAMIN SZOLD LEVIN	357

## REVIEW-ESSAYS

<i>Jewish Literature was Different</i> <i>History of Jewish Literature</i> by Israel Zinberg	BERNARD J. BAMBERGER	370
<i>A Great Dictionary for a Great Language</i> <i>Groiser verterbukh fun der yidisher shprakh</i> ed. Yudel Mark	MORRIS LAUB	376

## Editor

ROBERT GORDIS

## Managing Editor

RUTH B. WAXMAN

## Contributing Editors

JACOB B. AGUS, Baltimore, Md. • SELIG ADLER, Buffalo, N.Y. • ALEXANDER ALTMAN, Waltham, Mass. • MAX ARZT, New York, N.Y. • SALO W. BARON, New York, N.Y. • MEIR BEN-HORIN, Philadelphia, Pa. • HUGO BERGMAN, Jerusalem, Israel • BEN ZION BOKSER, New York, N.Y. • EUGENE B. BOROWITZ, New York, N.Y. • WILLIAM G. BRAUDE, Providence, R.I. • ARTHUR A. COHEN, New York, N.Y. • GERSON D. COHEN, New York, N.Y. • EMIL L. FACKENHEIM, Toronto, Canada • DAVID FLUSSER, Jerusalem, Israel • MARVIN FOX, Columbus, O. • SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, Pittsburgh, Pa. • MAURICE FRIEDMAN, San Diego, Cal. • THEODORE FRIEDMAN, Jerusalem, Israel • NAHUM N. GLATZER, Waltham, Mass. • JUDAH GOLDIN, New Haven, Conn. • ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN, Jerusalem, Israel • MAX GRUENWALD, Millburn, N.J. • MENAHEM HARAN, Jerusalem, Israel • WILL HERBERG, Madison, N.J. • ARTHUR HYMAN, New York, N.Y. • ERICH ISAAC, Irvington, N.Y. • MAX KADUSHIN, New York, N.Y. • MORDECAI M. KAPLAN, New York, N.Y. • MILTON R. KONVITZ, Ithaca, N.Y. • ARTHUR J. LELYVELD, Cleveland, Ohio • SOL LIPTZIN, Jerusalem, Israel • LEVI A. OLAN, Dallas, Texas, • HARRY M. ORLINSKY, New York, N.Y. • JAKOB PETUCHOWSKI, Cincinnati, O. • LEO PFEFFER, New York, N.Y. • JOACHIM PRINZ, Newark, N.J. • EMANUEL RACKMAN, New York, N.Y. • NATHAN ROTENSTREICH, Jerusalem, Israel • ZALMAN M. SCHACHTER, Winnipeg, Canada • DAVID S. SHAPIRO, Milwaukee, Wis. • DAVID WOLF SILVERMAN, New York, N.Y. • ERNST SIMON, Jerusalem, Israel • AARON STEINBERG, London, England • SHEMARYAHU TALMON, Jerusalem, Israel • SINAI UCKO, Herzliyah, Israel • DAVID WEISS, New York, N.Y. • PAUL WEISS, New Haven, Conn. • TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN, New York, N.Y. • HARRY A. WOLFSON, Cambridge, Mass. • MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD, New York, N.Y.

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

*Judaism* will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.

## *The First Reader*

ON FEBRUARY 27, 1974, AMERICAN JEWRY LOST one of its most brilliant sons. The eminent philosopher and educator, Professor Horace M. Kallen, passed away at the age of ninety-one after a distinguished and fruitful scholarly and academic career, which included dedicated Jewish service and leadership in the cause of Zionism and civic rights as well.

When, early in the nineteen fifties, I proposed the idea that the American Jewish Congress undertake to publish a journal devoted to Jewish philosophy, religion and ethics, and thus fill a gap in the worldwide Jewish cultural scene that was both a tragedy and a disgrace, there was considerable scepticism among Congress leadership as to the feasibility of the idea and its appropriateness for AJC. Fortunately, the proposal received the enthusiastic and active support of Professor Horace M. Kallen and *lehavdil bein haḥayyim vehaḥayyim*, Professor Milton Konvitz. Congress undertook to maintain the journal as it has done during the intervening two decades and more.

Professor Kallen served on our Board of Contributing Editors from the inception of the journal until his lamented passing. His intellectual vigor remained unabated and his warm concern for his fellow Jews and fellow men was an inspiration to all who were privileged to come in contact with him.

We mourn his passing and rejoice in his achievements. *Yehi zikhro barukh!*

---

All observers are agreed that the Yom Kippur War has shaken the pillars of Israeli life, both material and spiritual, to their foundations. The impact upon world Jewry has been scarcely less traumatic. Undoubtedly, the passing of time will afford a better perspective for evaluating the significance of the war and its aftermath. Nevertheless, the process cannot be postponed for the future. It is imperative to begin, even now, to seek to comprehend the shape of the future.

In a very thoughtful essay, "Israel, Galut and Zionism: The Changed Scene," *Efraim Shmueli* relates the events of the past year to changing values, both in Israel and the Diaspora. His discussion has important implications for the settlement of "the Palestinian problem" and the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

No Jewish thinker in our age has exerted a wider influence upon Jewish, as well as upon Christian, religion than Abraham Joshua Heschel, who was an honored member of the Board of Contributing Editors of this journal. His richly evocative style and his active participation in confronting the major ethical challenges in American and Jewish life have given him a deservedly unique position. The body of his thought, expressed in a half dozen important works, has been subjected, as was to be expected, to critical analysis from various points of view. In his paper, "Abraham Heschel and His Critics," *Saul Tanen-zapf* presents a valuable survey of the various criticisms expressed on Heschel's philosophy of religion, and offers his own response to these challenges. It goes without saying that room for discussion still remains, but the author has substantially advanced our understanding of Heschel's thought as constituting a significant body of religious and philosophic discourse.

The hysterical excitement which greeted the emergence of the "Jews for Jesus" movement and other types of "Jesus Freaks," particularly among Jewish youth, has subsided. However, the problem of the alienation of many elements of our youth from Judaism is very real. On the basis of considerable experience in working with Jewish youth, *Moshe Adler* discusses the phenomenon in his paper, "Alienation and Jewish Jesus Freaks." He urges an energetic and sympathetic approach to these young people who are seeking to find roots for themselves and to establish their spiritual identity.

The achievements of Reform Judaism and, by that token, the positive contributions of the movement to Judaism as a whole, serve as the point of departure for a trenchant paper by *Eugene B. Borowitz* entitled, "God and Man in Judaism Today: A Reform Perspective." He then proceeds to analyze the dilemmas of faith—and of non-faith—confronting the modern Jew. Borowitz vigorously affirms the importance of recognizing the centrality of the Covenant between God and Israel and the reality of the relationship between God and man, so that both partners are involved with God in the task of creating the world. His analysis of the present spiritual landscape and his prescription for healing our woes transcend the circles of Reform Judaism and are relevant to all who are concerned with the Jewish condition today. The paper ends with a moving tribute to Abraham Joshua Heschel's life and activity which, quite apart from his specific theological stance, may well serve as a paradigm for the modern Jew.

Reform Judaism has set an excellent example that might well be emulated in other movements and institutions in Jewish life, by a far-

reaching re-examination of its theoretical assumptions, unconscious pre-suppositions, and concrete practices. For many decades, the "modern" synagogue of all denominations, and not merely Reform, has laid great stress upon "decorum," no doubt under the influence of the dominant patterns in Western society. This stress upon decorum was felt to enhance the "spirituality" of religion.

In his paper, "Reform Judaism: Evolution and The Stork," *Norman Mirsky* points out that the elimination of physical activity in ceremonials in favor of decorum, has desiccated Jewish religious life and eliminated much of the color and vitality involved in the practice of the *mizvot*. He urges the restoration of Jewish ceremony that involves all the senses. He points out that the genius of the Jewish tradition recognizes the organic relationship of body and soul, and refuses to admit a dichotomy between them.

There is an explosive contradiction at the heart of American society today. On the one hand, lip service is paid to the ideal of universality, expressed in many forms, from ecumenicism in the religious sphere to "togetherness" in the area of advertising. The desire to "get with it," to "belong," to identify with the mass, is frequently the cause of defection from Judaism and other particularist traditions in the name of the greater good and the greater whole. On the other hand, in spite of all the tributes to universality, American society is being violently rent asunder by partisan groups and power-blocs that are constantly increasing in number and intensity. Not so paradoxically, both contradictory factors, universality and divisiveness, unite to weaken the sense of Jewish identity and commitment.

It is, therefore, no wonder that an aspect of the Jewish tradition that is looked upon in many quarters with great disfavor today is the idea of "separation." This tenet of the Jewish tradition receives its classic expression in the Biblical pasage, "Behold a people dwelling apart, not reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9).

In his carefully reasoned paper, "The Doctrine of Separation," *Sol Roth* analyzes the role of this principle in the life of mankind, in the formation of personality, and in the creation of community. He also discusses the role of reason, both in religion and life. He concludes that the sense of commitment involved in the *mizvot* is basic to the doctrine of separation, which he holds to be essential if Jews are to remain Jews and, indeed, if men are to be truly human.

All the Biblical festivals were originally agricultural in character, reflecting the relationship of the Hebrew to his natural environment. Ultimately, the historic experience of the Jewish people added a religious-national significance to the holidays. This process of transformation



is particularly interesting in the case of Shavuot, which began as "The Feast of the First Fruits," but attained its deepest significance as the season of the giving of the Torah. The process is analyzed by *Bruce H. Charnov* in his paper, "Shavuot, *Matan Torah* and The Triennial Cycle."

While the effort cannot be described as a mass movement, it is undeniable that there is a ground-swell of interest in the resources available in the Jewish tradition for modern Jews seeking a meaningful identity and a viable life-style and worldview to sustain them in a chaotic and rootless age. Hence, a deep and serious interest in the content of Hasidism has developed, even after due allowance is made for the lure that the exotic holds for our contemporaries.

However, Hasidism is not the only resource available to the modern Jew. A far less well-known phenomenon, the Musar movement, founded by Rabbi Israel Salanter, is examined by *Arnold Rachlis* in his paper "The Musar Movement and Psychotherapy." The movement, which had tremendous impact upon East-European Jewry, particularly in Lithuania, still possesses values that are being explored anew today. Mr. Rachlis' paper is particularly significant, because it stresses the psychological insights of the Musar movement which have a striking affinity with many aspects of contemporary psychotherapy.

In 1946, the Russian-Jewish historian, Saul M. Ginsburg, published a volume entitled *Meshumadim in Tsarishen Rusland*, "Converts in Tsarist Russia." Had it appeared today, he might well have called it "Studies in Jewish Alienation." As the inner world of Jewish tradition came into contact—and conflict—with the modern world, the result was a large number of varied reactions, both collective and individual.

Many of them were very fruitful. In the area of religion, there were the various reformulations of Jewish traditions—Neo-Orthodoxy, the Reform movement, Conservatism and Reconstructionism, as well as the philosophy of individual thinkers, of whom Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Mordecai M. Kaplan and Abraham J. Heschel are the best known. The rise of European nationalism was undoubtedly a potent factor, though obviously not the only one, in the rise of Zionism in all its schools, as well as the tragically short-lived Diaspora nationalism of Simon Dubnov and his associates. In the area of culture, contact with modern European literature stimulated and influenced the progress and direction of the richly creative Hebrew and Yiddish literature, notably its fiction, drama and poetry. The impact of modern scholarship is, of course, obvious in the creation of what was originally called "The Science of Judaism," and which has been im-



measurably broadened to include research into all phases of the historical Jewish experience from earliest Biblical days to the present.

There were also pronounced negative effects in this contact between the Jew and the world. The need for personal adjustment between inner Jewish life and the secular age raised problems for virtually all modern Jews in greater or lesser degree. Those who opted for assimilation soon discovered that their decision was by no means as simple and clean-cut as it appeared in the beginning, but that, on the contrary, it often proved a source of profound and enduring trauma. This was true even of the most "consistent" assimilationists, who adopted the path of formal conversion to Christianity, in order to achieve total integration into the majority culture and society. Most of these assimilationists have not revealed their inner struggles and sufferings, which can only be inferred from their lives. There is great human interest in those where some insight into their inner turmoil is available.

In the Fall 1973 issue of JUDAISM, we published, in translation, the chapter of Ginsburg's work dealing with Peter Shafiroff, who was an important counsellor of Peter the Great in his effort to drag Russia overnight into the modern world. Of Shafiroff's attitude toward Judaism, which he abandoned early in his career, we know virtually nothing. In the current issue, we publish Ginsburg's study of Avraham Uri Kovner, a nineteenth century Russian-Jewish journalist and critic, whose torment both as a Jew and as a convert can be documented from his writings. The translation is the work of Claire B. Shapiro.

While the royal road of Zionist history has been well researched, there are interesting byways that shed light upon the varieties of human nature and the divergences in motivation which ultimately coalesced to produce the powerful creative force that brought the State of Israel into being. One such byway is explored in *Benjamin Szold Levin's* paper, "Prophet of the Lord: Dumas *fil's* vision of Israel." More than two decades before Herzl's *The Jewish State*, the idea of a return to Zion was proposed in a play by the younger Alexander Dumas, one of the most successful French playwrights of the nineteenth century. The work belongs to the same genre of "romantic Zionism" of which George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* is the greatest, but by no means the only, example.

R. G.

# *Israel, Galut and Zionism: The Changed Scene*

EFRAIM SHMUELI

AN EXTRAORDINARY EVENT OF SUCH DIMENSIONS as the Yom Kippur War, with the crisis which followed in its wake, calls for a critical reorientation of the whole philosophy of Zionism. Basic assumptions must be reconsidered calmly but definitely, beyond the euphoric state of mind produced by the Six-Day War and the melancholy of the recent experience. What follows is an attempt to re-evaluate the Jewish reality as it presents itself in the changed scene.

## *I. Galut, Diaspora, and the Zionist Ideology*

For a period of more than a hundred years, before the establishment of Israel, Jews lived in a dual dimension: as continuing their participation in the collective self-realization of the Jewish entity (however it was defined), on the one hand, and as looking for individual self-realization (essentially, but not necessarily, outside the collective Jewish entity), on the other hand. The first, the traditional dimension, may be termed the Galut (Exile) dimension. The second, the secular—Diaspora (Dispersion), dimension.

The difference between Galut and Diaspora is the following: Galut is charged with a high voltage of religious and historical evaluation. It means a sojourn in a strange land, a sojourn which, someday, in the Messianic era, will come to an end. Between the fall—the destruction of the Commonwealth—and the eschatological rise, the Jew is a foreigner dwelling in the lands of the Gentiles, and he organizes his economic, socio-political and spiritual life accordingly. He builds his own institutions and strives, as far as possible, to be autonomous, if not sovereign, in legal and administrative matters, in language, and in all religious and cultural affairs relevant to his life and education. This is the positive aspect of the Galut dimension—the continuity of traditional collective endeavors of self-realization. Many historians, sociologists, poets and novelists have described the patterns of this autonomous collective self-realization. Some found in the “ghetto,” or the *shtetl*, the highest moral and religious qualities.

That the Jew encounters rejection is understood and expected in these abnormal conditions, and is accepted by him as a destiny ordained by Providence. In Galut he lives with the expectation that his plans

---

EFRAIM SHMUELI is currently professor of philosophy at the Cleveland State University.

for collective self-realization will be continuously frustrated by the hostile forces of his host nations. This is the negative aspect of the Galut dimension, whose most horrifying manifestation was the Holocaust. Although hope is never abandoned that redemption will follow the tribulations, Galut ultimately means the possibility of a Holocaust. True, just as some nights are illuminated by the moon, Galut is not always sheer darkness (as Chaim Greenberg argued so eloquently). However, basically, the inherent quality of the Galut experience is habitual anxiety, a non-specified expectancy of grave events. Although the gloomiest prophets had hardly imagined the scope of the Nazi Holocaust, credit must be given to the Zionist theory for having foreseen it. Zionism's robust realism has stood out in times when the prevailing theory was evolutionary, liberal, progressivistic, and essentially, by its very character, did not take into account the possibility of catastrophic disruptions.

Reasons for both mild and catastrophic outbursts of anti-Semitism are manifold, and Zionist leaders were not the first who analyzed the causes of anti-Semitism, but they made this analysis the pivotal point of a broad politico-historical outlook. They realized that the positive aspect of the Galut dimension of Jewish life, namely the possibility for collective self-realization, could be almost annihilated in a modern, secular civilization, particularly in those countries where Jews enjoyed civil and political emancipation. They warned that an explosion might come, *although nobody could foresee its ferocity. We shall return to this most ominous manifestation of Galut, but, first, let us see what Diaspora means.*

The Diaspora dimension of Jewish life is devoid of the emotionally intense charge of a host of religious-historical meanings; it denotes, prosaically, the notion of a geographical dispersion, like the migration of any other nationals, witness the British or the Italians, without a specific providential destiny or mission. It is ideologically and emotionally indifferent, if not opposed, to the collective self-realization of the Galut dimension. The Diaspora dimension is mainly one of individual self-realization. In it the individual Jew attempts to adjust his ideas and behavior to the non-Jewish environment in a variety of degrees of "assimilation."

The positive aspect of this Diaspora dimension is manifested in the astonishing achievements of Jewish talent in all fields of human endeavors. In a relatively very short time emancipated Jews have not only absorbed, with great enthusiasm, the accumulation of ideas and techniques of Western civilization, they have also become pioneers of thought and skills in the techno-scientific mastery of nature. As individuals they have succeeded in gaining comforts which were inaccessible to their forefathers.

The negative aspect of the Diaspora dimension has been the loss of involvement on the part of the creative individual in the collective enterprise of the Jewish people. The Jewish community has not shared the gains of the successful individuals, yet has always been blamed for the errors or misdeeds of those who failed the larger society, or who appeared to fail. In personal life, the negative aspect of the Diaspora dimension has been most visible in the emotional and intellectual tensions of the so-called "marginal" Jew.

Beyond any relationship to both the Galut and the Diaspora dimensions stands the totally assimilated Jew. Zionism believes that assimilation is an actual solution for individual Jews, but it can never solve the "Jewish problem" on a mass scale. Kissingers are admired, suspected, feared or lamented, but they can never become an example for the solution of the problem presented by the Galut dimension, and not merely for the very fact that such outstanding personalities are so very few.

More basically, Zionists, even today, after the emergence of a relatively prosperous and influential American Jewry, which exemplifies perhaps the highest possible achievements in the Diaspora, are not convinced that the negative aspect of the Galut dimension has, indeed, been eliminated from Diaspora life. Against the liberal and progressivistic modes of thought which are deeply ingrained in the minds of Western Jews, Zionism voices a conservative warning. It deplores the loss of adhesiveness offered by the collective self-realization, that is, the loss of the only positive aspect of the Galut dimension, and cautions that its negative aspects might still be present.

## II. *Zionism and the Freedom of Self-Determination*

Zionist ideology, in its Western form, was born out of the dilemma of the Diaspora dimension. The Diaspora Jew, that secular or semi-secular individualist looking for the enjoyment of his newly-acquired rights and benefitting from a more-or-less liberal legislation and tolerance of opinions, felt deeply wounded by the outbursts of anti-Semitism in the last quarter of the 19th century. He could not lightly dismiss the new and old forms of hostility as residuals of the Dark Ages, destined soon to pass. Anti-Semitism was too potent a force in contemporary life, and was particularly painful to emancipated Jews. Pinsker, Herzl and Nordau saw anti-Semitism as a post-emancipation and post-Enlightenment conflict destroying the basis of the Diaspora dimension in its positive aspect, and not permitting the adjustment of Jews to their changed environment. These leaders maintained that civil and liberal emancipation was not sufficient to guarantee a peaceful existence to the Jews in the countries of the Diaspora. The aspiration

of individual self-realization, within the framework of the non-Jewish collective as a main reference group, could not be fulfilled as long as Jews bore the stigmatized status of an unwelcome, homeless minority. Pinsker stated this idea in a classical paragraph in his *Autoemancipation*:

The essence of the problem, as we see it, lies in the fact that, in the midst of the nations among whom the Jews reside, they form a distinctive element which cannot be assimilated, which cannot be readily digested by any nation. Hence, the problem is to find means of so adjusting the relations of this exclusive element to the whole body of the nations that there shall never be any further basis for the Jewish question.

Assimilation, then, was no solution. Besides, Jewish history has proven that even individual Jews do not assimilate easily.

Herzl proclaimed the purpose of Zionism, in the so-called Basel program, as the securing for the Jewish people of a "publicly recognized, legally secured, home in Palestine." The program deliberately exhibited a low profile with its ambiguous term of a "home," and the tortuous terms of "legal security" and "public recognition." The idea, however, was always clear: a third dimension, namely, the State dimension, would be the synthesis of all positive aspects of Jewish individual and collective life, as briefly described above.

Anti-Semitism, Herzl argued, has many sources and faces—religious and emotional, socio-economic and ethnic. In a word, most irrational and most rational causes and motives intermingle to produce the impossibility of Jewish survival, both in the Galut dimension, as well as in the Diaspora dimension. With all their belief in the rational progress of humanity, the Zionist founding fathers were liberals deeply wounded by the events of their time (the Dreyfus trial, the pogroms) and unhappily convinced that the advancement of tolerance would take many generations. Individual self-realization had to be sought within the realm of collective self-realization. The positive Galut aspect must merge with the positive Diaspora aspect within a third dimension, namely, that of a Jewish State, the dimension of freedom of self-determination.

This freedom of self-determination comprises the positive elements of both individual and collective self-realization. Individual self-realization, adjusted to the needs of the group, it was widely believed, would enrich the whole community. Within the legitimate collective framework, personal fulfillment could be complementary, and not antagonistic, to group fulfillment. There had often been complaints that talented Jews could not find an outlet for their creativity in the ghetto. The State of Israel would certainly provide a more fertile ground for the growth and cultivation of Jewish talent.

### III. *The Mythological Distortion*

The negative aspect of the Galut dimension included discrimination, persecution and sporadic outbreaks of violent hostility. A typical pogrom was characterized by the ferociousness of an incited population and the helplessness of the victims, with the safeguards of law and order appearing only after the disaster, or when the Jews defended themselves. Very often the police took away the weapons of the victims and blamed them for provocation or aggression.

The epitome of this disastrous situation was, as we know, the Holocaust of our time. Psychologically, it was made possible by a deliberate revival of the old myth of the eternal struggle between the "Children of Darkness" and the "Children of Light." All the evils of nature and of society were concentrated and personified in this Manichean myth of the demonic Jewish power of destruction. The Jew became the personification of perniciousness itself, the incarnation of all that plagues mankind. Therefore, he had to be destroyed.

It is of interest to note that Pinsker's explanation of anti-Semitism already emphasized the irrational source of hatred of the Jews. He called it "Judaephobia," and described it as a disease, a form of suffering from fear of demons, "a psychic aberration" which, he believed, was hereditary. Since this particular disease had been transmitted for 2,000 years, he also believed it to be incurable. The Jews, he argued, lost their political entity and yet were not destroyed. They continue to live in the frightening form "of one of the dead walking among the living." However, Pinsker prescribed a remedy in rational terms, namely, the resettlement of the Jewish people on a land which they could call their own.

Later analysts, who also emphasized the irrational source of the problem of anti-Semitism, although on a more subtle level of theory and detailed clinical research, neglected to point to a political solution of this problem of the Jewish people. Sartre, in his *Portrait of the Anti-Semite*, and the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality*, blamed the anti-Semite who was using his passionate hatred as a defense mechanism in the economy of his inner disturbances and compensations, or they blamed repressive socio-economic, political conditions, particularly authoritarian family structures, which produced totalitarian views on the inevitable apocalyptic battle between the principle of good and the principle of evil, a battle which would continue until the destruction of the representatives of evil. With all their subtle observations on the character of this anti-Semitic Manicheanism, these scholars did not discuss the premise that the restoration of Jews to their homeland might resolve, or at least alleviate, the conflict. Only after the publication of their work did Horkheimer, Adorno and some other co-

authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* admit the significance of the Zionist solution for the alleviation of the anti-Semitic prejudices. So did Sartre.

After World War II there began the process of de-mythologizing in the Western world as well as in Russia. But this process was interrupted simultaneously in Russia and the Arab countries at about the end of the '50's.

In the recent struggle between Soviet Russia, the Arab nations, Israel, and its "patron," the U.S.A., the irrational Manichean myth was again fostered and intensified. The Soviet and Arab propaganda machines are now piling new distortions on the wild caricature of the *Elders of Zion* in torrents of verbal violence, mostly demagogery for "internal consumption," which is tolerated by many as the legitimate rule of the game.

The hatred of the Arabs toward the Jewish State cannot be conventionalized as a national conflict like any other. It is very different, for example, from the conflict between Iraq and the Kurds, Iraq and Iran, the Algerians and France, or the classical conflict between Germany and France. The rejection of Israel has an obsessive depth and intensity and it extends to the hatred of all Jewish qualities and to the very existence of the Jewish people as the incarnation of the spirit of evil. It is no wonder that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, that fictional anti-Semitic tract produced at the beginning of this century and full of gross falsifications, became so widespread in the Arab propaganda machine, and that King Faisal of Saudi Arabia recently distributed the *Protocols* to French journalists who visited him when they accompanied the French Foreign Minister. Earlier, on December 30, 1973, in a speech delivered in Mecca before an audience of Moslem pilgrims and diplomats, King Faisal said, "We must unite against Zionism and Communism, which are both the most dangerous enemies of Allah and the faith of Islam."

This is the main idea of the Palestinian Liberation Movement. In its Palestinian National Covenant, this Movement has declared that Israel is a "constant threat to peace in the Middle East and the entire world." Only those Jews who lived in Palestine before 1917 are to be recognized as citizens. Only Palestinian Arabs possess the right of self-determination, and the entire country belongs to them; warfare against Israel is legal; any solution that does not involve total liberation of the country is rejected; and Israel's self-defense is illegal.

The Arabs' conception of the conflict between them and Israel is strongly colored by mythological distortions, produced by a concentrated intensity of "autistic hostility," as some psychologists term this kind of antagonism. The Arabs deny the right of existence of the State of



Israel, of the very identity of the Jewish nation. (The Jews are allegedly not descendants of the people who lived in Palestine in ancient times.) Israel has become the symbol of all the demoniac evils which plague Arab ambitions on both the personal and political level.

Detailed psychological analyses have explained some grounds for the propensity of the Arabs to accept mythological images and to reject rational avenues for resolving their acute socio-economic and emotional problems at this stage of their transition from a semi-feudal, traditional society to an urban, secularized, oil-rich, and large, influential bloc of sovereign nations. The autistic denial of reality has been made easier by the use of totalitarian slogans, which suggest the apocalyptic nature of the struggle between the apostles of freedom and equality on the one side, and Zionism, Imperialism and Colonialism on the other.

The mythological character of the Arab conception of the conflict has been explained, by Yehoshafat Harkabi, as a defense mechanism which substitutes for achievement, as a compensation for failure, and as a help both to inspire faith in the change desired by the leading elite and to mobilize support for it. An ideology elevated into myth cannot be disregarded as a mere jumble of rhetoric. It is influential. It works, because it fulfills significant functions in the economy of emotions and reflects both pressures and ambitions. That such an ideology commits to action cherished by the whole community has been shown to be quite obvious. The discrepancies between action and ideology do not decrease the "realistic" value even of the most unrealistic mythology.

The myth of the Arab ideology justifies the aim of liquidating Israel, as Harkabi and many others have sufficiently documented. In the eyes of the Arabs, the liquidation of Israel rectifies an historic injustice on the part of the Jews, who robbed the Arabs of their country. The obligation to respect the sovereignty of a state, even if acknowledged by the United Nations, cannot apply to Israel. The State of Israel is aggressively expansionistic. It aspires to occupy Arab countries and, ultimately, to dominate the whole world, as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* have described. The conflict with Israel is a "fateful struggle" which cannot be avoided, an "absolute war for life and death," or, as Haykal, the editor of *al-Ahram*, put it, in his journal of June 12, 1964:

The dispute between the Russians and the Americans . . . is an ideological dispute, over a way of life. On the other hand, in our case, here with Israel, the dispute is life itself; to be or not to be.

The aim of the Arabs must be, therefore, the disappearance of Israel. The very existence of Israel poses the greatest danger to the whole reality of Arab nationalism and Arabism in general. The conflict becomes an absolute metaphysical clash which transcends all boundaries of rationally controllable forces.

Even if one does not accept all the tenets of Harkabi's analysis, one cannot disregard the documents which corroborate his arguments. No other voices of the Arab leadership or press have clearly expressed a different opinion on the nature of the conflict, although it is true that Sadat attempts to avoid the radical mythological phrases used so lavishly by his "charismatic" predecessor.

#### *IV. The Post-Yom-Kippur War Predicament*

It is safe to say that the recognition of Israel by Egypt is a result of Israel's capacity to assert its presence in the Middle East. But, because of a discrepancy between Israel's military power and her political influence, the Israeli army was stopped in the midst of the momentum of a great victory. It was mainly the Russians, but it was also Kissinger and the U.S. State Department, who insisted that Israel should not totally defeat the Egyptian army. A victory, Kissinger argued, would endanger a peaceful settlement. Thus, recognition of Israel by the Arabs was promised.

However, negotiations about the disengagement of armies and the settlement of territorial disputes, and even the acceptance of Israel as a state, as proclaimed by Egypt, are not compatible with the demand to restore "the rights of the Palestinians," or, as the other popular code words put it, "equitable solution," "the restoration of natural rights," or "the restoration of Palestine's Arab character." Adjustments of relations between two states is of a different origin and character than the claim of the Palestinians which threatens the very existence of the state. If the problem were merely the adjustment of territorial disputes, it could have been solved without too many difficulties. It is the Galut aspect which creeps into the political situation and distorts reality by its mythological character.

Israel was precisely dedicated to the demythologizing of the negative Galut aspect by the ingathering of the Jewish people and, thus, removing the causes of anti-Semitism. Zionism intended to turn the mystery of Jewish Galut life into a problem which could be rationally solved by return to the homeland. But this last war, endangering the very existence of the State, shattering all confidence in the invincibility of the Jewish State under all conditions, and showing how the nations, those safeguards of law and order, kept help from the defending army, has cast a shadow of Galut on Israeli existence.

Could it be, then, that the many peaceful and military efforts of the Zionist settlers and their descendants, of the refugees from the Holocaust and from the Arab countries, that all their achievements of turning desert and swamps into highly developed agricultural areas and techno-scientific urban centers, were only destined to reproduce

the Galut dimension in the very core of the radical attempt to overcome it? Horrifying as this possibility is, it cannot be easily dismissed in the light of the Yom Kippur War and its aftermath. The outcome of the war clearly indicates the vast superiority of Israel's army, although outnumbered in manpower and sophisticated, deadly weaponry. Yet, the traumatic experience of the Arabs' attack and the strength and intensity of their fighting power in the large battles thereafter cannot be easily eradicated by the Israeli victories, especially since they could not be brought to a triumphant end because of the imposed ceasefire. The political conditions in the struggle of the world powers and their "clients" in the Middle East shatter any excessive confidence that the Galut dimension of Jewish life has, indeed, been de-mythologized and the situation of the Jewish people has become "normalized." Both on the ideological and the practical level, the mythological aspect of the Galut dimension lurks in the background of the very existence of Israel. It is interesting to note that those Jews in Israel who had gone through the experience of the Holocaust were less shaken than were the others. Galut anxiety prepared them for the worst. The lesson they had learned so well is that Galut is always, and everywhere, a possibility, but they also realized that Israel has provided possibilities for efficient defense.

Indeed, the following difference between Galut existence and Israel can be immediately observed. In defending their sovereign State, the Jews in Israel are not helpless. Even when many previous friends and supporters have become neutral bystanders, or even open antagonists, believing that their antagonism may be repaid by the money and oil of the Arab potentates, Israel is hopeful that it will be able to defend itself. This is not a pogrom situation with the policemen looking by, or disarming the defenders. This is not even a Munich situation. In a most decisive sense, the Israeli will to survive as a sovereign State is quite different from that of Czechoslovakia. Ultimately, Jerusalem, and not even Washington, decides, although the views and actions of foes and friends, particularly the supply of hardware, carry much weight in the decision-making of a self-determining Israel. The détente cannot be bought by endangering the survival of Israel in a Munich-type settlement. The elements of the conflict are very different, primarily because the Israelis are determined to stand their ground against any appeasement policy by the super-powers at Israel's cost.

The dual formula for the acknowledgment of the Jewish State, namely, the withdrawal from all occupied territory, and the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people, is a contradiction of claims. The second demand implies a dismantling of the State, the restoration of the negative aspect of the Galut dimension. Every time this claim is mentioned, a basic insecurity is introduced, which touches

the very core of the conflict. The redemption from the Galut dimension lies in the acceptance of the truth that this land belongs to the Jews by right, as testified by history and as proclaimed by the League of Nations and the United Nations, and not by chance, usurpation or conquest. This land was never a state before Israel came into being. A peaceful solution must acknowledge three basic facts:

- (1) historically, this land never belonged to "the Palestinian Arabs,"
- (2) there was an exchange of refugees between Israel and the Arab countries, one of the many which our times has envisaged, and
- (3) Jordan and the so-called "occupied" parts of Israel are inhabited by Palestinians and are the natural basis for their own sovereign state.

The Galut dimension of Jewish history can become the cause of a world catastrophe. On the other hand, the elimination of its negative aspects could be a blessing for the world, as the founders of Zionism long ago foresaw.

The highly dialectical process of the interpenetration of Galut, Diaspora and Israel into each other's domain is of great theoretical and practical significance. The Israelization of the Diaspora, wide-spread after the Six Day War, has deepened and broadened in this war, through an identification with the destiny of the Jewish State in its struggle for survival. The will for collective self-realization, which characterizes Galut, has been strengthened in the old and new centers of Diaspora. But, also, the threatening aspect of Galut has influenced Diaspora thinking about individual self-realization.

The most shaking experience, however, is the Galutization of Israel, that is, the increased anxiety that the very survival of the State and its population is at stake through the basically genocidal character of the Arab mythology which its proponents aspire to put into action. In a world climate of cynical self-interest and brute force, and forsaken by allies and quasi-friends who no longer acknowledge their obligation to undo their own atrocities of scarcely a generation ago, Israel's position might, indeed, invoke forebodings of a pogrom. The post-World War II emotional and intellectual climate, which helped to establish the State, seems to have changed in a threatening manner. The task of Zionism, therefore, is not complete as long as the negative aspects of the Galut dimension endanger not only some countries of the Diaspora, but primarily Israel itself.

#### *V. Implications and Conclusions*

This article has purposely not discussed a variety of salient points in the Arab-Israel conflict; it has only hinted at some. Its main topic is the reassessment of the unique character of this conflict: the denial to Israel of the very right of existence. But in order to make the con-

clusions more understandable, certain views which have not been mentioned must be explicated, at least briefly, even if they are not fully clarified.

The threat to the very existence of the State, which I termed above the negative aspect of the Galut dimension, has accompanied the history of the State from its very establishment and even preceded it. Thus, it is nothing new. But it was never so close to reality as at the beginning of the Yom Kippur War. The full realization of this threat is now agitating Israel and the Jewish world and is causing a state of anxiety, not to say depression.

Whether the undecided outcome of the war has, for the first time, provided a chance for a peaceful settlement, as so many experienced academic observers and active political leaders maintain, is still to be seen. We would like to believe in the statement of Sana Hassan (in *The New York Times Magazine*, February 10, 1974):

There can be no doubt that the Arabs now accept the reality of Israel's existence and that the war was aimed not at the destruction of Israel but at breaking the stalemate, regaining some of the conquered territory and achieving a stronger bargaining position.

Unfortunately, Miss Hassan does not bolster her assumption with open statements by Arab leaders. (She quotes only anonymous "moderates" for this opinion.) Those who hope that a new atmosphere of peaceful arrangements has emerged are wishing for a great, great deal now. It would be a dangerous fallacy not to work for the fulfillment of this wish and, simultaneously, not to realize the difficulties on the path to its fulfillment.

The soul-searching which is going on now in Israel, insofar as it touches not only actual military or political negligence or misbehavior, but, rather, the moral stance, is certainly in good, old Jewish tradition. I mentioned above the merging of collective and individual self-realization in the freedom offered by a self-determining state. By this freedom, I meant not merely the idea of national self-determination in the ordinary political discourse, but, also, the effective power to determine the *self* of a nation by whatever decisions or plans the nation makes concerning what it shall do or what it shall become. The decisions to change are made by the majority of the people through a due democratic process. The presupposition of such freedom is the idea that the *self* of a people is determinable by a deliberate policy. Such a policy, however, does not necessarily always harmonize with individual self-realization or even with traditional collective self-realization. The self-determining state has its own momentum of demands which often clash with the desires of the individual. The tensions between individual and collective self-realization in the Galut dimen-

sion or in the self-determination of Israel are hard to overcome. Self-realization must be bounded by legal and moral norms.

The three premises of a peaceful settlement for the Arab-Israel conflict certainly need more clarification. They are the core of both the problem and its solution. A vast literature has been published on each of the premises.

The problem of the Arab refugees seems to reproduce, in a way, the Galut situation which Zionism intended to dispose of for the Jews, and thus, ironically, to introduce the negative aspect of Galut into the Arab-Israel conflict. A discussion of the different nature of the problem of Arab refugees and their claim to the land of Israel must be reserved for another occasion.

Finally, since this conflict is more than a regional one, Israel's anxiety cannot be relieved without an easing of the tensions between the superpowers on a global scale. Because of its oil resources and its strategic position, the Middle East is the "soft underbelly" of Europe. It adjoins both Europe and Soviet Russia. The Soviets have relentlessly advanced their ambitious plans toward the acquisition of direct access to vital points and to the vast material resources. They act as "friend and ally" of the Arabs. The not-too-optimistic view of the near-future, expressed in this article, is due to this situation. Not all depends upon an Arab-Israel détente.

The opportunity for a negotiated, real peace, provided probably for the first time by recent moves in the Middle East, is not unambiguously free of dangers. The dangers are of two kinds: (1) that the Arabs will consider the ceasefire merely as a tactical and temporary phase in their effort to annihilate Israel, and (2) that the Soviets will totally dominate the whole area. The genuine hope for a *Sulh* (genuine peace) lies in a strong and always alert Israel which seizes the opportunity without disregarding the dangers. The second danger, paradoxically, could induce a new, definite sobriety into the Arab states. Instead of wasting their resources and energies in a continuous struggle with Israel, which would certainly keep them for a long time in the embrace of their "friend and strategic ally," this sobriety could call the Arab states to invest in the improvement of their rapidly growing populations. The clear grasp of the second danger, then, might contribute to an actual opportunity for Israel to overcome the fear of being annihilated and for the Arabs to abandon their fear of "Zionist Imperialism." This opportunity is worthy of the most genuine efforts on both sides.

# Abraham Heschel and his Critics

SOL TANENZAPF

## THE DOMINANT CONCEPTS OF ABRAHAM HESCHEL'S

philosophy of Judaism have not been subjected to sustained and probing philosophical analysis. This is largely due to the fact that Heschel is not taken seriously as a philosopher, either by his critics or by his adherents, even though he thought of himself as primarily a philosopher. He subtitled *Man Is Not Alone* "a philosophy of religion" and *God In Search Of Man* "a philosophy of Judaism." One reason for this anomaly is Heschel's insistence on the limits of rational discourse and the impossibility of demonstrating the basic affirmations of Judaism. Indeed, Heschel's stress on the Ineffable, referring at times to the indescribable qualities of our profoundest experiences, at other times to the divine dimension of reality, and at still other times to the sense within us that intuits the divine dimension, has led many readers to question whether he is in the realm of philosophy at all.

Another reason, undoubtedly, is that Heschel's style of writing is not discursive or argumentative, but aphoristic and epigrammatic, even lyrical. It is assumed by critics and followers alike that either one writes philosophy or one writes poetry, and that any writing which appeals to the emotions cannot claim truth and cannot be examined rationally. According to Petuchowski, what emerges from Heschel's writings is not a philosophy of Judaism, "but a feeling, a mood, powerful enough to carry us with it and heighten our religious sensitivity."<sup>1</sup> Arthur Cohen calls Heschel "a rhetorician of faith," whose eloquent descriptions of the pious life have become a substitute for theological argument.<sup>2</sup> Marvin Fox thinks that Heschel's style is, indeed, suited to his purposes, since his aim is not philosophic but kerygmatic, that is, to proclaim his insights forcefully and to get his readers to share his vision.<sup>3</sup>

Emil Fackenheim, on the other hand, attempts to defend Heschel against the objections of critics, but does so by making Heschel impervious to philosophical analysis. Heschel, he asserts, is engaged in devotional writing, in confessional religious thinking, whereas Heschel's critics misunderstand him to be engaged in reflective thinking about religion. Heschel's writing is based on his religious commitments, but

---

1. Jakob J. Petuchowski, "Faith as a Leap of Action: The Theology of Abraham Joshua Heschel," *Commentary*, 25 (May, 1958), pp. 396-7.

2. Arthur A. Cohen, *Natural and Supernatural Jew*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), pp. 258-9.

3. Marvin Fox, "Heschel's Theology of Man," *Tradition*, 8 (Fall, 1966), pp. 80-81.

---

SOL TANENZAPF, a graduate of Yale University and of the Jewish Theological Seminary, is associate professor of Humanities at York University in Toronto.



the task of the philosopher is to examine those commitments, to show why one should enter into one religious commitment rather than another.<sup>4</sup>

Two writers have sought to defend Heschel's philosophic credentials. Fritz Rothschild asserts that, in addition to descriptions of religious experiences and the life of piety, and phenomenological analyses of those experiences, there is, in Heschel's writings, a philosophical approach. Although Heschel does not present reasoned arguments for the truths of Judaism, he does attempt to show how the teachings of Judaism are relevant to the problems of thoughtful and sensitive persons and how they deepen our understanding and appreciation of the human situation.<sup>5</sup>

Edmond Cherbonnier's reply to Heschel's critics is, I think, the most successful. Heschel's major claim is that, implicit in Biblical literature is a coherent philosophical world-view; Heschel's achievement is to make the Biblical world-view explicit and to examine the implications of that world-view for religious thought. The Biblical conception of the world as formulated by Heschel is open to philosophical criticism and poses a significant alternative to secular Humanism. Heschel is not an irrationalist; he does not disparage human reason as such, but he does reject traditional Rationalism because its main tenets are inconsistent with the Biblical vision of reality.<sup>6</sup>

Cherbonnier's reading of Heschel is, I think, essentially correct. And his suggestion that Heschel's more poetic utterances can be transposed into prose and then examined is well taken. A prosaic restatement of Heschel's main themes would, it is hoped, gain in clarity what is lost in emotional force and aesthetic value.

According to Heschel, all knowledge of God must come through God's self-disclosure; what we know of God is what God has made known to us. Speculative reason cannot, by itself, find God; the unaided intellect has not been able to demonstrate with certainty its conclusion about the nature of God and the universe. But man is not lost; God is actively seeking to relate himself to men. God is revealed in the awesome and sublime aspects of our experience of the natural and human world, in the prophetic understanding of the events of Israel's history, and in certain moments in the religious life—in worship, in doing *mizvot* and in learning. Man's task is to respond to God's address to him and to live in a way that is worthy of God's concern. Man's awareness of the divine presence depends primarily on God's initiative, but it requires, also, a trusting response on man's part.

4. Emil Fackenheim, "God in Search of Man" (review), *Conservative Judaism*, 15 (Fall, 1960), pp. 50–53.

5. Fritz Rothschild, "The Religious Thought of Abraham Heschel," *Conservative Judaism*, 23 (Fall, 1968), pp. 12–24.

6. Edmund Cherbonnier, "A. J. Heschel and the Philosophy of the Bible: Mystic or Rationalist?", *Commentary* 27 (January, 1959), pp. 23–24. Also, "Heschel as a Religious Thinker," *Conservative Judaism*, 23 (Fall, 1968), pp. 25–28, 33.

Consequently, Heschel's only recourse is to formulate clearly the Biblical conception of reality and to make explicit its assumptions and its implications; he must do the same for all other metaphysical interpretations of reality, and then confront his reader with the necessity of deciding between them. Given Heschel's epistemological starting point, no reasons which would be universally recognized as binding can be given to justify one decision or the other.

Juxtaposing as he does the conflicting claims of competing world-views, without giving reasons for preferring one to another, does leave Heschel open to the charges of dogmatism and irrationalism. It is my own view that the Biblical world-view both requires, and admits of, rational justification. Religious beliefs, considered as such, apart from the whole way of life we know as "being religious," are logically of the type of metaphysical beliefs or world-views; they have more or less evidential support, depending on their adequacy to explain the facts of experience coherently and consistently with what else we know from other disciplines. The fact that evaluative judgments are made in assessing the strength of the evidential support does not sufficiently distinguish a theistic interpretation of the world from explanations in other disciplines to warrant our denying them the status of rational arguments.

I do not dispute the basic Jewish affirmation that the beliefs which, together, constitute the Biblical world-view originate in revelatory experiences or in the inspired interpretations of sacred texts. My contention is that their origin in the revelatory experiences of prophets and in the less unusual experiences of ordinary believers, which Heschel has so vividly described, does not exempt them from rational criticism. Heschel's sometimes too cavalier denial of the need for reasoned argument in support of the main tenets of Jewish belief is, in my opinion, a serious weakness in his position, but one that is not irremediable. It is left to his supporters to do what he did not do; indeed, to do what he did not see the need for doing. His rejection of all attempts at philosophic justification is too wholesale; it is not philosophic reason that teaches views of God and man which are incompatible with the Biblical view, but particular philosophies. He did not consider whether there are metaphysical systems that would permit him to formulate, without distortion, his understanding of the Biblical vision of reality and, in turn, provide some evidential support for it. It is my opinion that Whitehead's philosophy, as developed by Charles Hartshorne and others, would allow him to do just that.

Moreover, I think that what rational justification there is for religious belief is very weak, indeed; the evidence is ambiguous, and men of undoubted intelligence and good will interpret it diversely. Uncertainty, it would seem, is the only attitude that can justifiably be taken towards our religious beliefs. Heschel is mistaken, then, in claiming more

certainly than he is entitled to. Revelatory experiences are not self-authenticating; like our experiences of the sensory and human world, they admit of diverse—indeed, mutually exclusive—interpretations. Heschel acknowledges as much: the false prophet, after all, is one who mistakes a subjective experience for an authentic revelation. But Heschel does not give us adequate reasons to support the claim that the experiences of the prophets are cognitive and not just a subjective feeling or a mental aberration. He repeatedly makes the point that the prophets understood their experiences to be genuine encounters with God and that all we have to go on is what they said happened. Yet, Heschel does not explain why we should trust in the prophets' self-understanding. Surely, reasons must be given both to persuade the secularist and to justify the convictions of the believer. Heschel's anti-rationalism has caused him to lose sight of the need for philosophic argument and to overlook one well-founded lesson to be learnt from philosophic inquiry into religious belief, viz., that there is little justification for dogmatic assertiveness. Several critics have noted, with justification, I think, that Heschel often exhibits a lack of sympathetic understanding for the plight of the unbeliever.<sup>7</sup>

These considerations point up serious weaknesses in Heschel's position, but they should not divert our attention from his important contribution to philosophic inquiry: his explication of fundamental Biblical concepts and his formulation of the Biblical world-view. Before we can assess a world-view and test its adequacy to explain the world we know, we must be clear that its fundamental concepts are neither absurd nor empty and that the system formed by these concepts is coherent.

At the center of Heschel's formulation of the Biblical world-view is the concept of divine pathos. Jewish philosophers have, on the whole, ignored this concept, primarily because it was incompatible with their philosophic assumptions. Heschel's contention is that these systems are based on non-Biblical categories of thought and that Biblical categories have a claim to be considered in their own right, since they form a coherent pattern on a par with other metaphysical systems. He is formulating a world-view in terms of authentically Biblical concepts, rather than explaining Biblical concepts in terms of non-Biblical systems of thought.

It is noteworthy that the critic who does take Heschel seriously as a philosopher, Eliezer Berkovits, launches a scathing attack on precisely this concept of divine pathos.<sup>8</sup> It is my opinion, however, that Berkovits' objections are not decisive and that the concept of divine pathos is

7. Cohen, *Op. cit.*, pp. 252-3; Eugene Borowitz, *A New Jewish Theology in the Making*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 172-73.

8. Eliezer Berkovits, "Dr. A. J. Heschel's Theology of Pathos," *Tradition*, 6 (Spring, 1964), pp. 67-104.

capable of precise definition and rational defense. In offering such a defense, I am, of course, going beyond the limits set by Heschel's own theory of knowledge.

Berkovits' analysis focuses on *The Prophets* and examines two main topics: the theology of pathos and the religion of sympathy. On the theology of pathos Heschel writes, "Whatever man does affects not only his own life, but also the life of God insofar as it is directed to man."<sup>9</sup> God "does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the world and reacts accordingly. Events and human actions arouse in Him joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath."<sup>10</sup> In a word, God is personal; and what can be said about the human person can appropriately be said about God. Heschel contends that it is a mystery, which cannot be grasped rationally, why the transcendent God should be affected emotionally by the conduct of men, but this is precisely what the prophets proclaim.<sup>11</sup>

Prophetic religion, then, is a religion of sympathy. The prophet does not come to know God by any process of reasoning; he knows God by directly confronting the divine presence. The reality of God is experienced by the prophet as God's concern for man. The prophet is not aware of the divine pathos intellectually; instead, he identifies with it in sympathetic imagination. Indeed, the prophet feels what God feels.<sup>12</sup> Heschel is careful to distinguish prophecy from mysticism: the prophet retains his individual identity; there is no mystical union or loss of self in the prophetic experience. The prophet achieves, not identity with God, but sympathy for what is happening in the life of God.<sup>13</sup>

Berkovits accepts without demur some themes in Heschel's account of the prophetic conception of God: God is personal and He is concerned about man. "These are," he writes, "familiar thoughts, well understood by all who have some knowledge of Biblical theology or religious philosophy."<sup>14</sup> What he objects to in the theology of pathos is Heschel's claim that God is not only concerned about man, He is also affected by man and responds to him emotionally. Heschel, he thinks, is profoundly mistaken in ascribing to God emotions of love and anger, joy and sorrow, and in describing the prophets as sharing in the emotional life of God. Berkovits characterizes Heschel as a Biblical literalist who has ignored the long history of Jewish philosophy and its wrestling with the problems of divine attributes and Biblical anthropomorphism.<sup>15</sup>

This contention is surely unfair. Heschel's sensitivity to the poetic

9. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 226.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-4.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 308-311.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 257-8.

14. Berkovits, *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

usage of words prevents him from being a literalist. He has insisted, repeatedly, in numerous contexts, that Biblical language is not descriptive, but indicative; descriptive words have conventional and definite meanings, whereas indicative words intimate meanings that cannot be fully articulated. Biblical language does not communicate information about the divine reality; it evokes within us a capacity to respond to the divine presence. The prophets' words are not intended to describe in terms of meanings that are already familiar to us, but to bring us into new ways of looking at reality. In a memorable passage, Heschel declares that the prophets' statements about God are understatements. By deliberately using inadequate language, the prophet drives us beyond all words to an immediately-experienced sense of God's aliveness and His overwhelming concern.<sup>16</sup>

Heschel argues that Biblical language is in no danger of being taken literally, since Biblical authors are aware of the uniqueness and transcendence of God and do not attempt to describe God's nature in itself, but His relationships to man and the world. Thus, the use of anthropomorphic expressions in the Bible differs significantly from their use in pagan, especially Greek, religious literature. Moreover, the problem with which the Greek philosophers had to deal is not a problem for the prophets; divine expressions of emotion are not arbitrary and capricious, but ethically determined.<sup>17</sup>

Berkovits does not think that Heschel has solved the problem of anthropomorphism and presents a series of arguments to show that the concept of divine pathos is filled with inconsistencies. If Berkovits is right, and the concept of divine pathos is incoherent, then this, to my mind, counts decisively against any claim to truth that can be made for the Biblical conception of reality as delineated by Heschel.

Berkovits' critique of the theology of pathos is largely based on Maimonidean assumptions; his arguments are set out with clarity of expression and logical preciseness.

I. There is, he reasons, an absolute distinction between infinite and finite; all our concepts are derived from finite experience and, strictly speaking, have no relevance to God. Therefore, we are left with a dilemma: we either associate some positive meaning with the words we use about God and thereby ascribe finite qualities that are irrelevant to God, or we are using words without meaningful positive content.<sup>18</sup>

This argument is intended to explain why one cannot ascribe to God emotions such as love and anger. What is puzzling is that Berkovits does acknowledge that God is personal and is concerned with

16. Abraham J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955), pp. 178-183.

17. Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp. 268-278.

18. Berkovits, *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

men. But what does it mean to be concerned for another if you are not affected by the other person? If I say that I care for a person, but I do not share her joys and sorrows, that I am unaffected both by the happy and sad occasions in her life, one would rightly wonder whether I am really concerned, whether I really do care for her. Caring destroys independence and self-sufficiency; to love is to be vulnerable, to be open to and influenced by, the one loved. Berkovits' contention that God cares for man, but is not affected by what man does, strikes me as not simply incompatible with the plain meaning of the text, but as logically self-contradictory. The opposite of caring is not hatred, but indifference. If Berkovits is objecting to the use of analogies and metaphors drawn from human relationships in thinking about God, then how can he say that God is concerned about man? Indeed, how can he say anything at all about God? If God is so entirely different from human personality, then no analogues at all are appropriate. What follows is theological silence, which is a respectable position, often advanced, but seldom adhered to. What does not follow is blanket permission to say whatever one wants, even the logically absurd.

Berkovits proposes to solve the problem by the use of Midrash, exegetical interpretations that permit one to acknowledge the plain meaning of the Biblical text, without having to assent to all the philosophic implications of that plain meaning. This is a traditional solution to the problems arising from Biblical passages which are either philosophically questionable or morally objectionable. But Berkovits does not give us a Midrashic interpretation that would meet these specific difficulties. Speaking generally, I doubt whether Midrash would work for us as it did for the Tannaim and Amoraim, for we are aware, as they seem not to have been, that ideas have a history, that the meanings of words are not independent of their intellectual and cultural context.

Midrashim are, in some respects, more like poetry than like philosophy; they have many levels of meaning, some more manifest than others. In this, they are like the Biblical passages whose meanings they explicate. But, surely, the task of the Jewish philosopher is to formulate and to examine the conceptual content of those Midrashim. To resort to Midrashic thinking is no solution to philosophic problems; it is, rather, an abrogation of the philosophic task.

II. A second important argument presented by Berkovits is also Maimonidean. God could not be affected from without, nor could He be moved by emotions, for if God is completely actual and perfect, change in the mind of God is inconceivable. A perfect being cannot change for the better, since he is already perfect; and to change for the worse would be inconsistent with his perfection. But Heschel describes revelation as an event that occurs in God before it can be experienced by the prophet, as "an ecstasy of God." To talk as Heschel

does of revelation as a moment in the life of God, when He decides to turn towards man, to make known what was previously concealed, is to say that God undergoes change. But a perfect being is unchangeable.<sup>19</sup>

Anticipating such objections, Heschel points out, quite correctly, that perfection, absoluteness, and infinity are not attributes of God in the Bible. Berkovits has to acknowledge this, but goes on to argue that perfection and absoluteness are implied by the Biblical conception of God's transcendence. I doubt, however, that perfection, in the sense of complete actuality and immutability, is even consistent with the Bible's view that God, Who transcends the world He created, is, nonetheless, actively involved in the events of human history. Heschel's reply, then, is that perfection and absoluteness are Greek categories which Jewish thinkers, ever since Philo, have been trying to reconcile with the Biblical understanding of God, and doing so rather badly.

Furthermore, Heschel contends, the Greeks disparaged the emotions in man, and if it is deplorable for man to feel emotions, it surely must be so for God. But, in the Bible, there is no depreciation of the emotional life of man nor any hesitancy to ascribe emotions to God. The emotions, as well as the intellect, have their seat in the heart; indeed, both are necessary if we are to know other persons. If God is to know us concretely as individuals and not, in some general way, as part of the universal concept "humanity," then God must become aware of us emotionally.<sup>20</sup>

Berkovits agrees that God knows the human individual and not just humanity; therefore, he reasons as follows: It is inconceivable that God should feel emotions, but it is the case that God knows men as concrete facts and not as abstractions. Yet, to know another person concretely, one must be aware of him emotionally. Therefore, God's knowledge and concern for man is incomprehensible.<sup>21</sup> Berkovits' answer is to appeal to mystery a step earlier in the argument; after all, Heschel must concede in the end that it is a mystery why the transcendent God should be affected by us. Berkovits thinks that his position is preferable to Heschel's, since it does not diminish, as does Heschel's, the absolute difference between God and man. Berkovits writes: "Dr. Heschel commits the unforgivable fallacy that he equates the human way of realizing a fellow man as a concrete fact with the way of God."<sup>22</sup> In my opinion, Berkovits' contention is as unsatisfactory as Heschel's; in reply, I would say of Berkovits what he has said of Heschel: "... to call something a mystery and a paradox is no theology either."<sup>23</sup>

19. Ibid., pp. 77-78.

20. Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 257.

21. Berkovits, *Op. cit.*, pp. 81-82.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 80.



111. Berkovits examines Heschel's distinction between God's being and God's actions and relations to His creatures (Heschel does not want to say that God in His being is affected by man) and concludes that the distinction will not stand up, since what God says and does results from what God is. In Heschel's theology, on the other hand, the two aspects of the divine reality, its true Being and its attitudes and acts, remain unrelated to each other. Heschel's position in the end approaches dualism; he seems to talk as though there were two gods: one is inaccessible, wrapt in mystery, perfect and immutable; the other, comprehensible, related to man, loving and caring.<sup>24</sup>

This objection is very much to the point: Heschel's writing is not precise and is open to such misinterpretation. However, the dominant position emerges clearly enough. It is left to Heschel's expositors to add logical preciseness; the burden of this paper is that this can be done while still remaining faithful to Heschel's insights.

IV. Berkovits' fourth argument is one that, at first sight, I was inclined to dismiss out of hand. To talk of God feeling sorrow and of suffering with man, and of prophetic religion as empathy with God's suffering, is Christian and an outrage to Jewish sensibilities. This looks like an *ad hominem* argument, but, on reflection, there seemed to me a valid point to the argument. The life of Jewish piety is, after all, part of the data with which a Jewish theologian must work; his job is to give an account of not only the thinking of the Jew, but of the religious experiences of the Jew. If this is not part of the religious experiences of the Jew, then there is a problem here for Heschel. But simply to say, as Berkovits does, that Heschel's conception of a religion of sympathy is Christian, that it humanizes God, that a man-like God inevitably leads to a God-like man is not enough. That Heschel's formulation has parallels in Christian thought is obvious. But it is to be hoped that Jewish thinkers are secure enough in their commitments to Judaism that they can re-examine those aspects of Judaism which have been given special emphasis in Christianity. The idea of the Suffering Servant is an important resolution of the problems of pain and evil, but because it is so fundamental to Christian belief, Jews tend to overlook it and an important theme is lost to Jewish philosophic thinking.

I do think, however, that the idea of God's sorrow, His sharing the suffering of man, is part of Jewish religious experience, although it has not been normative. As Berkovits himself notes, in addition to the explicit claims of the prophets, there are Midrashic, Kabbalistic and Hasidic texts that seem to convey this notion. Berkovits' rejoinder is that sorrow is usually attributed to the *shekhinah* or to the lower worlds of the *sefirot*, not to God Himself; that in rabbinic Midrash references to God's anguish and grief are usually accompanied by the disclaimer "as it

24. Ibid., p. 101.

were" (*k'vayakhol*). Indeed, that is usually the case, but not always. For example, the practice of rising during the night to perform the midnight service (*tikun ḥazot*) is justified in the sources by reference to a Talmudic passage which describes (without disclaimer) God's anger and grief at the destruction of the Temple (*Berakhot*).<sup>25</sup>

If perfection and immutability are the major categories of Greek thinking about God, then what are the major categories of Jewish thinking? According to Heschel, they are implicit in the idea of unity, God's oneness. The affirmation that God is one means, among much else, that God is unique and supreme, unlike anything else in the universe and, therefore, alone worthy of our worship. Because He cannot be compared to anything else, we are filled with wonder, amazement and a sense of mystery in His presence.<sup>26</sup>

The great Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, I think, used the concepts of perfection, absoluteness, infinity and immutability to account for why the pious Jew believed that only God deserved our whole-hearted devotion. To convey a sense of God's unique excellence, His incomparable reality and goodness, they posited an absolute difference between God and man. God, they held, is infinite, perfect, unchangeable, necessary and eternal, totally unlike man whose life is ephemeral, limited, unstable and who depends on causes outside himself for his continued existence. The point at issue, then, is whether we can explain God's worshipfulness, uniqueness and unsurpassability, without resorting to non-Biblical concepts such as perfection and immutability.

The weakness in Berkovits' solution is that, in his view, God is so totally different from men that He is incomprehensible. And I am always worried by Hume's question: What is the difference between a God who is thoroughly incomprehensible and mysterious and no God at all? Moreover, He leaves himself open to the positivist's objection that the concept of God is self-contradictory and, therefore, meaningless. For Berkovits continues to use ordinary predicates such as concern and knowledge of a being whose nature is absolutely perfect and to whom they cannot apply.

A much more cogent solution to these problems is to be found in the new theology being developed by Charles Hartshorne and others within the framework of a Whiteheadian metaphysic. Whitehead's philosophy, I think, has both coherence and explanatory power; it can account adequately for new developments in the natural and behavioral sciences and, because its major categories are temporal and personal, is compatible with the Biblical world-view.

25. *Shulhan Arukh Oraḥ Hayyim*, 1, 2.

26. Abraham J. Heschel, *Man is Not Alone* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), pp. 111-123.

Hartshorne reasons that God could not conceivably be surpassed by another being either ontologically or axiologically; if God were surpassed by a greater or better being, then we should worship the one who surpassed Him. But why cannot God be said to live and grow and surpass Himself? If it is assumed that God is complete actuality or static perfection, then, of course, He could not surpass himself; what is complete and perfect cannot change. However, if change is a pervasive feature of reality and if growth and novelty are real values, then change need not be denied of God. Indeed, since change leading to growth and self-transcendence are real values, an immutable being would have less value than men; and, since men would have surpassed it in value, it would not be worshipful.

Similarly, it is argued that God must be concerned for others or He would be surpassed by human beings who are capable of concern. And God's concern or love, like man's, must be incomplete and mutable, since love should be responsive to the needs of the other which are changing from moment to moment.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, if God were not capable of self-surpassing, creatures could not contribute anything to His inner life or mean anything to Him; there would then be no point to our worship of God.

On this view, God is not absolutely perfect in all respects. He is absolutely perfect in His being, since He is not dependent on anything else for His continued existence. but He is only relatively perfect in other respects, e.g., God does depend on others for His joy and happiness. Nevertheless, He, alone, is worthy of our devotion because although He can surpass an earlier state of Himself, no other being can surpass Him in reality or in value. And, on this view, to say that God's goodness is unsurpassably great is to say that God acts with concern for all the interests affected by His actions. Should human beings improve in goodness and increase their happiness, then God will rejoice and gain in satisfaction. It means, too, that God suffers with us, that He is not indifferent to the pain He cannot prevent. This is implicit in the notion that God is the all-inclusive reality, immanent in the universe as well as transcendent, as it is in the message of the prophets: God feels anguish for the suffering of a people whom He loves, but who have cast Him off.

Thus, Heschel's understanding of the Biblical world-view raises important philosophic issues. Indeed, it calls into question some fundamental presuppositions of Jewish philosophic thought. His concept of divine pathos points toward a tenable resolution of the problem of pain and evil. For these reasons, therefore, his work deserves, and requires, the serious attention of philosophers.

---

27. Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), esp. pp. 15-19; see also, his *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle: Open Court, 1973).

# *Alienation and Jewish Jesus Freaks*

MOSHE ADLER

THERE IS OFTEN A CAUSE FOR THE DEFECTION OF Jewish youth from Judaism for which negative associations with Judaism are merely reinforcements. This cause is at least as psychological as it is religious, and it is universally human rather than particularly Jewish, though in Jewish youth one of its characteristic expressions is defection from Judaism. I am referring to alienation from self: a sense of having no personal worth and, therefore, no real home. Alienation from self is a form of that anxiety, articulated by modern thinkers, which one discovers in one's own soul after systematic reflection, and from which one seeks to redeem oneself by working out some kind of existential commitment. But there are important differences between the soul-anxiety of the philosopher and that of the lonely child (I am speaking of the philosopher and the lonely child within each of us). Whereas the philosopher manages to step outside of his feelings to some extent, in order to get into better touch with them, the lonely child experiences a continuous disquiet—a feeling that when he is standing he ought to sit down, and when he is sitting he ought to stand up—but he cannot manage to question his way out of this disquiet because his reasoning about the state of his own mind travels in circles. Moreover, philosophical forms of soul-anxiety generally arise from an idea of the absurdity of living in a universe devoid of meaning, an idea which presupposes the sense of one's own worth, if only existence itself could be given meaning. Alienation from self, on the other hand—the soul-anxiety of the lonely child—arises from a pre-logical sense that, while existence itself indeed has meaning, the person is incapable of participating fully in it because he has no intrinsic personal worth. He finds that he can achieve extrinsic worth—market value—by fulfilling the expectations of other people, usually those he sees as authority figures, and by trying to become what he thinks they want him to become. But he can never feel wholly certain that his own existence is justified. Thus, despite his acquired ability to juggle relationships, he is rarely, if ever, able to relate fully in an I-thou manner, since he remains viscerally uncertain of whether “I” is ever worthy of being taken seriously. The lonely child, whether young or old, is alienated from the world because he is alienated from himself.

Alienation from self is not the only cause of defection to Christianity, nor necessarily the cause of most defections. It is only now coming to light as a cause, and virtually no statistical basis as yet exists for generaliz-

---

MOSHE ADLER is Hillel director at Los Angeles Valley College and teaches and writes on the applicability of Jewish tradition to contemporary issues.

ing on it. Moreover, I speak neither as a psychologist nor as a sociologist (I am neither), but as a rabbi who has found, more and more, that at the heart of many religious problems there are hurt human beings. To deal with the religious question being asked while ignoring the unasked psychological question is to falsify the issue.

Yet, while keeping alert to the psychological dimensions of the Jesus-trip problem, we must avoid the temptation to write the whole thing off as some sort of mental aberration. Some Jews become Christians out of sincere, thought-out conviction, while others, who first enter Christianity through the back door of psychic disorder, eventually find in that religion the means for pulling their lives together and functioning as human beings. Then, too, there are modes of Christianity which, unlike the fundamentalist mode, inspire direct ethical action within history, so that to represent all Christianity as monolithically passive is to engage in base polemics which, at best, becloud the real issue. When we examine such causes of defection to Christianity as alienation from self, what we should be doing is learning which Jews hurt, and trying to heal their hurts within a religious Jewish milieu before they begin trying non-Jewish trips as balm. While guiding them towards people who can provide sound professional help, we should provide for them a warm and accepting Jewish religious peer-community within which they can come to learn their own self-worth.

Awareness of alienation from self as a cause of Jesus-tripping was something that dawned on me gradually. In the course of dealing with the theological questions raised by Jews who had been "saved," I found time and again that, no matter how far a person was willing to go in admitting that his preference for Pauline Christianity over Pharisaic Judaism reflected more an ignorance of the latter than an expertise in the former, there came a point at which the person suddenly shut off his thinking. That point usually came when I demonstrated that, whereas the "old" Torah speaks of reward and punishment for deeds, it operates on the assumption that man can eventually turn from evil and do good, while the "new" Torah speaks of God's love as an unearned gift to man and operates on the assumption that man can never free himself from sinfulness. I would express incredulity that a Jew would want to trade the "Old Testament" God, who creates man with a potential for perfecting himself and watches with infinite patience for man to fulfil that potential, for a "New Testament" God who creates man irretrievably sinful, dooms him to damnation for that sinfulness, reveals to him a Law only in order to demonstrate that man cannot keep it, and then offers him a gift of salvation whose price is that man despair of his own potential for perfectability. At that moment a strange thing would happen. Whereas I had seen converts to Judaism, as well as *baalei-*

*teshuvah*, express delight at the prospect of sharing in a revelation in which God shows His love for man by giving him the laws and teachings by means of which he can make himself holy, the Jesus-freaked Jew would shrink from this prospect, wave aside the Pauline documents of law-equals-failure-equals-guilt which make up so much of the New Testament, and declare, "But it's not like that, it's really about how Jesus loves me!"

The more this happened, the more it led me to believe that in such cases psychology preceded theology: the Jesus-freaked Jew had a pre-existent need to structure the universe so that his role in it would be to fail and God's role would be to love him in spite of his failure. For reasons which had long preceded his conversion, he had become existentially convinced of his own worthlessness and could simply not conceive of anyone, even God (especially God?), loving him for himself and for what he might become. He could conceive of being loved, if at all, only in spite of what he might never become. Thus, the acceptance which he so desperately needed would be more believable, when it came, if it were predicated not on denial but on affirmation of his worthlessness. Along came a community of fundamentalist Christians who furnished him, in a single stroke, with two things which he sought: a theology of defeatism embodied in a fellowship of acceptance. This Christian community said to him, in effect, "Don't fret about your failure. All humans are failures in the sight of God, but He accepts us anyway if we are saved. And so we accept you anyway if you are saved. Thus, we shall be a community of salvaged failures." Once this has happened to the self-alienated Jew, there is far less likelihood than ever that Judaism, with its teaching that he can make himself holy through good deeds, will be able to speak to his situation. Life has taught him that, while deeds can theoretically ennoble you, in practice they show up your weakness and, thus, degrade you. He knows that the most a good deed can do is temporarily to lend you extrinsic worth, but that sooner or later deeds show how worthless you are. Now, however, he has found a theology—shining, as it seems to him, from the pages of his own Bible—which gives ultimate validity to his sense of failure and, at the same time, allows him to undergo the symbolic death of his failing self and the birth of a new self who is no longer that individual but Christ. Most important is the fact that he has been accepted into a peer-community which shares that theology with him, and for whom that theology forms the organizing and validating metaphor of existence. He no longer needs to justify his existence because he no longer exists; Christ has saved him by destroying him ("I don't have to work at being good; I just let Christ work through me"). Now, whenever he begins to feel that he is lapsing back into sin (read: failure), all he

needs to do is repent. But it will not be the repentance of Judaism, which says, "Turn from evil and do good," for that, he knows, is impossible. Rather, it will be the repentance of Pauline Christianity, which says, "Die and be reborn, through surrender to Christ" (read: Your "I" is asserting itself. You must once again redeem it by destroying it). The more he lives within such a life-myth, the less will be the likelihood that he will seek therapy for his battered ego, since the life-myth itself is counter-therapeutic. Even if he does eventually seek therapy, there is no guarantee that, as he rebuilds his ego, he will ever allow himself to leave the Christian religious community, because it has become his home in the world. What he may do is begin to reinterpret the Christian life-myth so that it need not require the destruction of his ego. If, as he rebuilds his ego, he happens to have a series of elevating and guilt-free experiences within a Jewish religious peer-community, he may develop or rediscover loyalty to Jewry and Judaism. But, again, there is no guarantee that he will ever allow Judaism to supersede Christianity as the organizing and validating metaphor of existence. What he may do is begin to work out a serious existential commitment as the kind of Jew that Paul wanted all his people to become, a Hebrew Christian. Or, he may find that he can come all the way home to Jewry and Judaism. Before the Jesus movement can reach the self-alienated Jew with its two concentric circles—a theology of defeatism within a fellowship of acceptance—the Jewish people must reach him with three concentric circles: sound therapy, within a theology of self-confidence, within a fellowship of acceptance.

A primary cause of feeling worthless is guilt. I am not speaking of the kind of guilt which bears the same relation to morality as pain bears to health—namely, a warning signal that something needs to be corrected. Such guilt, which is the catalyst for *teshuvah* (by which I mean reorientation and rehabilitation), is a sign of moral and ethical responsibility, and as such it need not—indeed, it should not—continue once *teshuvah* is under way. Rather, I am speaking of guilt as a veritable state of being, which parents and schools induce in a child for failing to live up to certain kinds of expectations. Such guilt serves no constructive purpose for the child, and is nothing more than a means by which adults can manipulate him.

In speaking with self-alienated and formerly self-alienated young people, we often find that they were made to feel guilty during their childhood for failing to conform to some pattern which their parents had in mind for them. In some instances the pattern was made clear to the child, but he could not conform to it because it reflected not his own abilities, needs, and interests, but, rather, some fantasy of his parents regarding what they wanted their child to be. The parents,



in such cases, were considering their child, not as a separate and unique human being who came into the world through their instrumentality but, rather, as a mere extension of their own bodies and personalities. In other instances, the pattern was left vague and unspecified, and was only hinted at in statements that characteristically began with "Why can't you be . . .?" or "Even though you'll never be . . ." Whenever the child showed signs of discerning the pattern and of moving toward conformity to it, the parents would abruptly change the pattern, so that once again the child would have failed. In cases like this, it seemed clear that the parents had reasons for wanting their child to fail and were actually programming him for failure. A constant changing of signals, all of which foredoomed him to failure, can lead a child to fear not only that he is a failure but that life, itself, has no stable rules. It can lead him to seek unbending and simplistic rules of life such as those promulgated by fundamentalist Christianity or, indeed, by fundamentalist interpretations of Judaism.

In both types of cases—those in which an unrealistic pattern of growth was held up to the child, and those in which a continually changing pattern was obliquely flashed to him—the failure for which the child was made to feel guilty tended to be related to academic competitiveness ("achievement"), sexual attractiveness ("popularity"), acquisitiveness ("drive"), or combinations of these. All of these areas are extremely sensitive to the ego of a child, and most particularly to one in adolescence or pre-adolescence. When he grows up always in the wrong, he will seek a way out of the failure cycle in one of two ways. The person with greater resiliency will create, or appropriate, a model of self-expression commensurate with his own abilities, needs, and interests, and live his life in conformity to that model, shucking off the one his parents or teachers tried to thrust upon him. The person who has had most of the resilience trampled out of him will seek a model of self-expression predicated on his failure. It is this second person who is ripe for religious systems which teach that man's greatest worth lies in ceasing to affirm his worth.

The mental childbeating which we have been describing is further intensified by the school experience. While purporting to teach subject matter and learning skills, schools actually teach the school game: how to figure out what kind of teacher wants what kind of play-back from what kind of busy-work, so that one can "earn" the best grades and get into college, where the game can escalate. Success or failure at playing the game is equated not only with intellectual ability or the lack of it, but even with innate goodness or badness. It is no accident that neither parents nor teachers ever define "good student" and "bad student" as skilled and unskilled at playing the school game, but, instead,

leave these words hanging in the air, radiating their evaluative connotations. Only a child who is both perceptive and strong can break out of the paper universe created and sustained by the collusion between home, school, and the business world, and view his own personality apart from the irrelevant and wholly other-directed criteria of worth by which people are taught to judge themselves in that universe.

At the outset I stated that negative associations with Judaism can reinforce self-alienation in the Jewish child. They give a Jewish coloration to his failure-oriented picture of the universe, so that a characteristic way for him to bail out of that universe is by defecting from Judaism. This happens in several ways.

Jewish education in this country tends, in large measure, to be either shallow or oppressive. That is, either the school represents Judaism in such a way that it holds little, if any, obligatory content that distinguishes it from other systems or from general humanism. Or, the school represents Judaism in such a way that halakhah and aggadah, norm and opinion, sanctified *minhag* and vestigial custom are all equally binding, and that the slightest deviation from any detail or misgiving about any idea constitutes a sinful denial of Judaism. A feature common to both types of school is their preference for language or reading skills over content.

Even where the Jewish school does impart solid content to genuinely aroused students, there is little or no carry-over from school to home. Often, in fact, the home actively subverts what the child attempts to put into practice.

For many Jews, experiences with Judaism constitute but further extensions of the school game. Not only must a Jewish child live tensed from exam to exam and from grade level to grade level as his non-Jewish schoolmates must do; he must continue to live this same tension beyond public school hours, during Hebrew school, where the school game is played just as it is in public school. Yet there is one agonizing difference. Whereas with public school the parents at least try to assure the child that what he is taught has actual relevance, with Hebrew school they make no such assurances. On the contrary, the child soon learns that the only reason his parents are extending his scholastic hell beyond normal hours is his bar mizvah. How would it look to all of Mommy and Daddy's friends if their child—after years of tuition and synagogue dues, and with thousands of dollars tied up in the ceremony that climaxes it all—muffs his *haftarah*? It is the school game intensified to the nth degree. Not only are the visible tokens of achievement worth more than knowledge and its application—they are the only things of worth, while knowledge and its application are to be shunned.

In many Jewish homes, parents harbor confused feelings about what ought to be the practical implications of their Jewishness. Because they do not trouble either to acquire knowledge about Judaism or to think out its implications for their lives, they remain holders of disjointed behaviors, ideas, and feelings which are loosely associated in their minds as being, somehow, Jewish. Some of these behaviors, ideas and feelings may, indeed, be remnants of some earlier, more connected way of life (say, that of their parents or grandparents) whose connection has been lost or has never been adequately communicated, while others may represent ill-formed or ill-conceived Jewish responses which they felt called upon to make to one situation or another. Thus, for example, when parents tell their child, "We don't care whether or not you keep Jewish practices, as long as you don't marry a non-Jew or convert to another religion," they are presenting their child with a stated rule (Jews must never leave the Jewish people or marry outside it) and an observed behavior that clashes with it (there is essentially no way of living that distinguishes the Jewish people from other peoples). The unique religio-nationalistic context which alone gives meaning to the ban on marrying a non-Jew has been all but eroded away for these parents. They sense that it is somehow treasonable for a Jew to leave his people but are unable to communicate this sense to their child.

Although parents are exercising no malice when they broadcast confused and, therefore, confusing messages about the implications of being Jewish, they are, nonetheless, sabotaging their child's respect for Judaism. To the child, these messages read like something out of Orwell: "Jews needn't live like Jews, but they must make sure to marry within the fold lest they cease to live like Jews." Trying to discern how Jewish is enough and how Jewish is too much becomes, for the child, another case of trying to figure out what adults want and failing at it.

Parents often project onto the concept of Jewishness, itself, their own prejudices, fears, or vested interests, and communicate to their children the distorted vision of what it means to be Jewish. For example, when a black family moves next door and the child hears his parents exclaim, "There goes the neighborhood," he may well conclude that his parents harbor racist feelings. But when he hears them talk about how the *schvartzes* are driving out the Jews, he may generalize that to be a Jew is to be a racist. Similarly, when parents designate their own life style as the only one fit for Jews, they are, in effect, telling their child that to develop his own life style is to reject Jewish identity. And when they equate endorsement of the policies of an incumbent U.S. or Israeli government with loyalty to the United States or to Israel, they are teaching their child a Judaism whose sole commandment is "Thou shalt not rock the boat."

We have been speaking of how alienation from Jewishness can reinforce alienation from self, so that, when the child flees his unaccepting home to seek an accepting home, he seeks one which will be as unlike his Jewish home as possible. We have noted that a fundamentalist Christian peer-community fills this need because it provides both a fellowship that accepts him for what he is and a theology that transfers the locus of redemption from man's efforts to God's salvation. This theology fills not only a psychological but, also, a genuinely religious need because, by equating the person's own world picture with nothing less than that of the Creator, it unifies the disparate parts of the person's life and charges them with ultimate meaning. Therefore, in working out methods of preventing the defection of young Jews to the Jesus movement or to other religiously oriented escapes from the self, it is essential that we avoid oversimplifying the problem. A psychological counselor who regards all religious experience as an expression of neurosis, or all ritual observance as obsessive-compulsive behavior, is as little help as a religious zealot who believes that therapy is only for people who think they are Napoleon. Two key resources that bear on the problem, and are present in the Jewish community, are rarely if ever found in one place: classical Judaism and modern therapy.

On the one hand, there are religious movements which reach out to alienated young Jews with an accepting and worshipful fellowship. Yet the leaders of these movements generally refuse to acquire even the most elementary kind of psychological sophistication, and are, therefore, unable to spot emotional disturbance unless it is acted out through erratic or destructive behavior. Callous to the utter vulnerability of a submissive youngster at odds with himself, these leaders lay on him a regimen of halakhic observance which would probably be too much and too soon for him even were it less authoritarian and repressive than their interpretation makes it. Taken by itself like that, without a concurrent program of sound therapy, such a regimen becomes a kill-or-cure method of "saving" the person by substituting surrender to a monolithic Judaic authority for surrender to Christological authority. Moreover, it often exacerbates the very sense of failure which alienates the person from himself, so that he ultimately reacts to the regimen either by placing increasingly compulsive interpretations on the concept of divine law, or, ironically, by dumping the whole thing and fleeing from Judaism to a system in which he can be a failure without having to work at it.

On the other hand, the counseling agencies of the Jewish community help individual Jews and their families to communicate with each other more effectively. Yet it is extremely difficult to find a counselor employed by the Jewish community who possesses even the most elemen-

tary knowledge of Judaism, or who has ever experienced its practices or wrestled with its teachings instead of merely looking on as a visiting anthropologist. As a result, counselors who are otherwise sophisticated, when confronted with a problem involving God and Torah, will all too often resort to stereotypes of God as a vengeful old man sitting on a cloud; of halakhic Judaism as obsessive legalism; or of non-traditional Judaism as ham-glutting. This is not merely a case of having to overcome one's personal biases in order to be more objective. It is a case of lack of the sophistication required for dealing with personal problems which have a distinctly Judaic dimension. Treating the alienated Jew's religious longings as if they were, in themselves, the cause of his condition is like trying to cure a glandular malfunction by removing the patient's endocrine system.

Solutions to the problem of which Jesus-tripping is but a symptom must be at once religious and psychotherapeutic; they must cut across denominational and institutional lines to bring all the resources of the Jewish community to bear on the problem; and they must be both long-term and immediate.

The most obvious places to begin designing long-term solutions are the home and the school. Ideally, I submit, the family and not the child ought to be the nuclear unit of the synagogue educational system. It may or may not be unrealistic at present to urge that afternoon religious school for the child give way to evening religious school for the entire family. But surely it is realistic to urge that synagogues replace weekend school for children with weekend Torah study sessions for families. The families which have comprised a class for a couple of months could form a *havurah* to hold retreats at which to celebrate Shabbat together; to discover participatory communal worship together; to discuss social issues, both particularly Jewish and universally human, with a view to working out Judaic responses to them; and to help each other work out schedules for gradually appropriating more and more of Jewish observance as they hear it speaking to them. The idea is to make Torah study a family affair and, thus, strengthen family ties around a core of joyfully shared Jewish experience.

The family counseling resources of the Jewish community need to be easily accessible, and presented in an unthreatening manner, to families with problems. Store-front walk-in counseling centers, like the Freda Mohr Center in the Fairfax section of Los Angeles, could be set up wherever there are concentrations of Jewish population. At the same time, synagogues, Jewish schools, and community centers could help maintain a continuous public relations campaign designed both to announce the availability of these counseling centers and to remove the stigma which many people still attach to psychological counseling.

The local Jewish family counseling agency, itself, could sponsor seminars throughout the city on various types of parent-child problems, with a view to helping parents develop more enlightened methods of child raising.

Hebrew schools and day schools need to place an equal emphasis on imparting the content of Judaism and on generating experiences in which students can live out that content. The learning situation should be interesting and non-competitive, as detailed by Hebert Kohl in *The Open Classroom* and as successfully adapted to the Jewish school by Cherie Koller (see her article, "A Time for Joy: The Open Classroom and the Jewish School" in *Response*, no. 12, Winter 71/72). This means, of course, that synagogues and school boards will have to offer salaries decent enough to attract creative educators to careers in Jewish education.

Perhaps it is time for those who view the Jewish day school as narrowing by definition, and the assimilatory public school as broadening by definition, to reconsider their opinions. The character of a day school, like that of any other type of school, depends on how involved parents are in the question of who runs the school and who teaches in it. If parents are committed to the idea that children can learn Torah, observe mitzvot, and explore the world in a non-repressive, non-competitive, and mind-broadening environment, they owe it to their children to maintain the kind of school which expresses that commitment.

At every Jewish school there ought to be a psychological counselor who would have office hours at the school at least once a week. He would keep tabs on the emotional welfare of the students, and would provide the teaching staff with in-service training on the counseling and referral roles of the teacher. Enrollment of one's child in a Jewish school should imply permission for the teacher or principal to have the child see the school therapist if necessary.

Every Jewish community should provide a program for producing Jewishly knowledgeable and involved psychological counselors, and for furnishing in-service training in Judaism to those counselors already in its employ. Yeshiva University's School of Social Service provides such a program on the east coast, as does Hebrew Union College's School of Jewish Communal Service on the west coast. More programs of this sort are urgently needed in every Jewish community.

In addition to these long-term solutions, some immediate responses to the problem are needed. An outreach program for the community, such as the one developed by the Los Angeles Hillel Council for the college campus, could be funded by the Jewish community at large or by denominational and interdenominational groups. Under such a program, there could be a store-front coffee house near each high school

and college, where students could find a short-order meal, a game of chess, a phonograph with Jewish and Israeli records, and shelves of interesting books on Judaism interspersed with bags of tefillin and other usable mizvah objects. There could be storefront information centers in major business districts and shopping centers. Festivals of Jewish music and of Jewish art, as well as Jewish book fairs, could be held in parks and malls throughout the city. And there could be a kind of halfway house with a full-time, live-in worker, lodging facilities for transients and runaways, an on-call psychiatrist, rabbis taking on-call shifts, and a regular counselor. Such a house is particularly necessary because transients and runaways are among the people most vulnerable to missionaries and other surrender-trip merchants. Lay outreach organizers could be taught Jewish content and trained in techniques of reaching people, and lay teachers of Torah could set up informal classes at institutionally neutral locations. Lay, rather than rabbinic or other professional organizers and teachers, are preferable because they would provide needed role models of Jewishly educated and involved people who are not "professional Jews." Of course, it would be necessary to train outreach organizers and teachers in fundamentalist Christian theology, as compared with classical Judaic views of God and man, and in countering the argumentative and manipulative techniques of missionaries. But in this area, and in all others of the outreach program, the main emphasis would be not to react against Christianity but to initiate with Judaism.

In responding to the sensitive psycho-theological problem of which the Jesus-trip is but one manifestation, the Jewish community faces two alternatives. We can flood the media with panicked denunciations that provide our adversaries with the kind of underdog image they thrive on; gimmick up institutions and formats that are religiously bankrupt or denominationally frozen; and work physical violence on missionaries. Or, we can view the Jewish Jesus-trip as a painful symptom warning us that Jewish life is ailing seriously. To choose the second rather than the first of these alternatives is to treat both the symptom and the ailment and, thereby, ultimately to produce results which, though less dramatic, are longer lasting.



# *God and Man in Judaism Today: A Reform Perspective*

EUGENE B. BOROWITZ

SOME HISTORIANS OF RELIGION HAVE SUGGESTED that the special genius of Jewish faith is its belief that God reveals His will in great and intimate detail to His people. Similarly, I submit that the special genius of Reform Judaism has been its emphasis on the role of people in religion.

Consider, for a moment, the intellectual schizophrenia of Moses Mendelssohn when, as the 18th century moved toward a close, he theorized how one might reconcile becoming modern while remaining an authentic Jew. Mendelssohn argued that, as far as ideas were concerned, Judaism gave the individual full freedom. Hence, a Jew could believe whatever the modern mind understood to be true. But as to practice, God had given the law to the Jewish people and it remained valid until God, and God alone, changed it. Mendelssohn thus wed modernity to Judaism—but each was required to sleep in its own bed.

What Mendelssohn thus joined together, the early generations of Reform Jews sundered. They knew, almost instinctively, that it was wrong for Jewish practice to petrify and for Jews, because of a lack of modernization, to be driven to Christianity. They sensed, intuitively, that it was right for them to make changes in the ghetto-oriented Jewish life-style they had inherited, even though the only authority they had for such change was themselves.

Here, for example, is the statement of the Committee on the Status of Women, reporting to the Brunswick Rabbinical Conference of 1846.

The halakhic position of women must undergo a change. . . . A mere theoretical recognition (of the dignity of women), devoid of all legality, gives them as little satisfaction as, for instance, the Israelites (Jews) are given in (German) civic matters. They have received assurances of their capabilities for emancipation, without, however, being indeed permitted to become emancipated. . . . For our religious consciousness, which grants all humans an equal degree of natural holiness, and for which the pertaining differentiations in the Holy Scripture have only relative and momentary validity, it is a sacred duty to express most emphatically the complete religious equality of the female sex. . . .

Considering the relevance of this topic a century and a quarter later, and particularly in view of the intellectual convolutions of those still seeking a Jewish legal way to do what the modern Jewish conscience has

---

EUGENE B. BOROWITZ is professor of education and Jewish religious thought at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, and editor of *Sh'ma*.

long mandated, this statement is notable for its forthrightness. Reform Jews have not always lived up to it but, at least, there has been no question as to where they stood. Note particularly the sense of authority by which these rabbis feel they can break decisively with the past. They speak unambiguously in the name of "our religious consciousness" and on that ground alone do not hesitate to contravene the Bible. They do not reject God or revelation. But they have introduced a new principle in discussions of Jewish obligation—more correctly—they have given it far greater weight than it ever had in Jewish tradition—namely, humankind's autonomous power to shape its religion and its destiny.

Reform Judaism succeeded in creating the basic model of all modern Judaism largely because it unleashed the religious power of the people in its midst. Without Reform's pioneering in liturgical forms, in popular education, in Jewish esthetics, in critical scholarship, in a modernized style for the rabbinate and the synagogue, in the general adaptation of Judaism to general culture, there would have been no modern Judaism at all. Conservative and Orthodox Judaism are substantially the offspring of our Reform Jewish daring—and the Reconstructionists, at least,\* have the occasional decency to acknowledge that debt.

This new-old Judaism sprang from our emphasis on humankind and its right to be substantially self-legislating. Yet, now, we must confess that the very principle which has been the basis of our success has, typically enough, also been the cause of our greatest failures. Take, for example, our continuing problem with prayer. The new Union Prayer Book will, I am sure, help many people pray regularly and fervently. At the same time, if our Reform Judaism continues, as often has happened, to concentrate so much on humankind that there is not much God left to pray to, even the best of prayerbooks will not vivify Jewish worship. Disguise it as you will, there is a fundamental difference between a community at worship and one engaged in enhancing inter-personal communication. The same cancer causes our more pervasive difficulty, our inability to create any significant inner sense of Jewish obligation. As long as Jewish duties are conceived of as coming eventually from humankind for the purpose of enhancing its humanity then we shall never have much sense of Jewish discipline. For, as we are free to make the forms, so we feel free to set them aside. By the same logic, most of us quickly give up our most piously assumed diets. Without much feel for God's involvement our sense of religious responsibility is so flexible that it easily leads to inauthenticity.

Like so many discoverers of a valuable insight, we Reform Jews pushed our genius beyond its reasonable limits. Stressing humankind's spiritual capabilities, we have neglected God's role in our lives. Some-

---

\* and the Editor of this journal—Ed.

liberals, like Mordecai Kaplan, have gone as far as to make God a mere name, used for whatever helps us achieve ethical ends. Our proper modern emphasis on humanity thus often becomes humanism, a faith that humankind, not God, rules in all power. In this shift of belief, I think we have been unduly dependent on what passed for modernity in Liberal Protestant theology. Much of what we said in the name of modern Judaism echoed the great liberal Protestants, especially Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Troeltsch and von Harnack. (Remember, please, that the teachers who trained the bulk of American rabbis acquired their Ph.D.'s in Germany—and with them they absorbed German modes of interpreting Judaism.)

I think it only an understatement to say that, in our day, the self-confidence of humanism is ludicrous. Spengler once seemed only a German romantic when, after World War I, he wrote darkly of the decline of the west. Today, his sentiments are proclaimed by the daily headlines. Secularity no longer is self-assured and triumphant. If anything, its moral collapse has been so thoroughgoing that it threatens to destroy whatever little faith in humankind we can still manage to muster.

I suggest that this was, in fact, the lesson the American Jewish community learned from its discussion, a few years ago, of the alleged death of God. Surely that debate had little new to teach us about God. The Jewish community had long known atheism and its more respectable, if timid cousin, agnosticism. Moreover, as far back as the 1930's Henry Slonimsky and Mordecai Kaplan had been teaching rabbis (and the laity) about a finite, limited God, while Samuel Cohon and, later, Samuel Atlas, in different ways, taught their students to think in terms of God as ethical ground and goal. So the discussion of the 1960's, with its compromise suggestion of God as limited rather than dead, had nothing much new to teach us about God. We were left with Job's question pretty much as he asked it and as, for some decades now, modern teachers had responded to it. Despite all the discussion, we have not gone much beyond the answers to the problem of evil proposed by our teachers long before the Holocaust.

Then why did our death of God agitation wither almost as quickly as Jonah's gourd? For a while it seemed a major threat to our community and we panicked at the thought that it might expose us all as synagogue-going closet agnostics. Yet these few years later it has died out among us as a significant religious option. I think the answer is given by applying Ludwig Feuerbach's rule: assertions about God are really assertions about man. What we learned in the death of God discussion was not that we could no longer believe in God as the all-powerful manipulator of history. After nearly a century of American Reform Jewish teaching we hadn't believed in such a God anyway. But we had believed in ourselves, in humanity's embracing goodness and in the omnipotence of education

and culture to turn the masses into the messiah. What died for us at Auschwitz was humankind as the all-powerful master of history—and its death has been confirmed by the continuing horrors of our time, by the Vietnam War, by our resistance to civil rights, by our callous exploitation of our natural resources and our powerless people, by the cynicism of the nations to the legitimate demands of the State of Israel, by the corruption of our culture, our government and even our family life. The truth is now manifest. We had put humanity in God's place. We cannot do so any longer. We cannot worship man despite his extraordinary power. The god of triumphant modernism has died for us.

But humanity abhors a vacuum of faith. Eliminate a god whom people truly worship, even if it is an idol, and they will soon give themselves to other forms of devotion. The death of belief in omnipotent humanity has now given rise to two diametrically opposed substitute religions. At the one pole, we flee from society and seek refuge in the self or through the self. This is the existential motivation behind the current interest in yoga, meditation and other varieties of Hinduism, or in the inner discipline of Zen Buddhism. Yet these systems, for all that American gurus have abridged the arduous discipleship required in Asia, still demand effort. Psychedelic drugs, however, are almost automatic. They bring one to bliss with no hassles about doctrine or form. They are a typical American technologization of what, in the classic religious traditions, required personal human involvement. In the devotion to drugs, as in religions of inwardness, self-concern obscures social responsibility and so violates the Jewish notion that one truly becomes a person by contributing to the welfare of the human community. I believe this affront to our values explains why the new attitudes to drugs have shaken our community far more than the new freedoms with regard to sex. Somehow we can conceive of greater sexual permissibility as making us better persons in a modern, yet Jewish, sense. Drugs, however, seem to dissolve our commitment to society and thus, from our Jewish view, destroy the self under the guise of helping it.

Existentially, I do think many of us, who do not experiment with drugs or gurus, have adopted a similar strategy and we should not confuse our timidity with righteousness. Our move to withdrawal is no less a-social for being quiet and undramatic. Everywhere one turns in the Jewish community these days one finds people concerned with living the good life—and while that generally does not mean utter self-indulgence, the connotations of good are more in the realm of pleasure than of morality. We want good food and good sex and good wine. We want to have good things and good times and, so, we begin to shift our vaunted Jewish activism more and more from social welfare to sophisticated consumption. It may not be much of a religion but at least no one can accuse it of being other-worldly.

Taken to an extreme, this new self-centeredness creates an intolerable burden for the individual. We no longer know what to do, since anything we might choose to do is equally valuable and, hence, equally valueless. The freedom to do whatever pleases us is exhilarating—but having no standards by which to direct ourselves is terrifying, and that has produced a second post-modern religious response, namely, the flight into Orthodoxy. Now God's will fills the void created by our inner liberty. God tells us what to do if we trust completely. We will accept leaders or gods as long as they will promise to give us the full and ultimate truth. Since God says so we will conduct ourselves in ways that are good for ourselves and others and, since we know this is the perfect truth, we will be serene despite severe trials. This is the existential ground from which, in recent years, there have arisen many cults which demand absolute belief: from the East, the Hare Krishna people and the Guru Maharaj Ji, and in the West, the various forms of Jesus Freaks, among whom we can include the Jews for Jesus.

For most Jews, however, Jewish Orthodoxy provides the normal alternative in this direction. God has said so and, therefore, we care for the widow, the orphan and the stranger in our midst even as we do not throw an electric switch on the Sabbath. How beautiful to live without most of the ambivalence which agonizes the liberal Jews! How wonderful to know, most of the time, just what it is one must do to be a worthwhile person!

Yet, despite such potential psychic gains, most of us are not willing to return to Orthodox Judaism. We only flirt with the possibility of what life might be like if we were Orthodox. We start wearing a yarmulka or baking our own *hallah*. Better yet, we invite the Lubavitcher *Hasidim* to spend a Sabbath at our synagogue. Some decades ago we cringed at bearded, ghetto types; today, we rather envy them their authenticity and often, out of our guilt, we are led to support a way of life which neither we nor our children are even remotely likely to adopt. For the truth is, we want the motivation and discipline of Orthodoxy but we cannot accept its absolutism or its rigidity. We want its Jewish commitment to action and society without its limitations on how our sense of what God wants of us, as modern Jews, may express itself.

We remain liberal Jews, then, because neither of the two responses to our new realism about humanity satisfies our deepest intuition. Withdrawal makes too much of our disillusion; Orthodoxy relies too much on God. True, we no longer think humanity is God—but that does not mean that people are powerless to do the good and that God cannot use them as active partners in consummating creation. Confronted by the alternatives of radical selfhood or divine absolutism, and rejecting either as adequate to our belief, we have discovered our own deepest commitments. Against the apostles of the self, we believe humankind has a

limited, though real, power to do justly and create a good society. And against all orthodoxies we believe that this power is what distinguishes us as persons and, hence, we may not sacrifice it to any teacher or institution or revelation of God which violates it.

But reaffirming faith in humankind cannot come from what we know about people. If, indeed, we are committed to human values, it is because we recognize that they transcend the human situation. Our revulsion over Auschwitz goes too deep to be ascribed to its violating our personal whims or some arbitrarily asserted standards. Our disgust with the current state of the American society is too profound to be attributed to childhood conditioning or present class consciousness. Against the teaching of much present-day philosophy and science, we find that we do not consider the universe empty of values and man thus free to adopt any form of behavior whatsoever. No, in our very brush with the possibility that existence is meaningless, we have learned that we are believers. We admit that there are values which transcend us and our civilization. We are commanded to fulfill them and we are judged if we transgress them. And through this profound and intimate sense of universal value, we are led on to their immutable ground. Like Saul Bellow's heroes, Moses Herzog finding the limits of humanness, and Artur Sammler acknowledging the human contract, we have discovered that we still believe in God.

Insisting on humanity's special power, with all its limits, has led us back to God. For affirming God, it is now clear, is our basis for affirming ourselves, if not as we are, then as God would have us be. Post-modern faith, then, has two foci, though only one God. Humanity remains central to our belief, but it is no longer pre-eminent. This faith, that humankind is created so as to be God's partner in completing creation, has an old and, indeed, unique Jewish foundation. The Bible calls such a two-sided, God-humankind relationship, covenant. The Bible does not speak of the essence of God or of God's nature. Rather, it speaks at great length of God's relationship with humanity and, in turn, with its response to God. There is no confusion as to who dominates the relationship, for one creates and the other is created. Yet the creatures are so truly God's partner that, on rare occasions, they may argue God's judgment to God's very face. This old Jewish notion of covenant speaks to us of a partnership we know that we also share. We are part of humanity dignified by working at God's great purposes; we are the creatures who may love and serve God, who, in turn, is the companion of our existence.

This accent on our closeness to, and dependence on, God is somewhat different from the older accents of Reform Judaism—and from every sort of humanism and secularism. Man no longer seeks to occupy the center of the universe and, at the best, allows God some tiny corner of causation or some distant pinnacle of purpose on which to stand. Rather, in covenant, we are conscious that a real God, not ourselves,

meets us, and that our very existence rests on God's ever-present challenge and command, God's judgment and support. With the idolatry of liberalism behind us, the living God now emerges rightfully as our Lord.

Yet against the traditional structure of the covenant, we Reform Jews insist that humanity's role in the relationship is not essentially passive and receptive (a position even so modern a thinker as Abraham J. Heschel took in distinguishing his doctrine of the prophets' sym-pathos from Buber's I-Thou). Rather, we insist that humankind has an active, creative role to play in the process of understanding what God wants us to do, personally and communally, and in giving this sense of covenant-duty appropriate contemporary form. So, if we are more God-centered than an older generation of Reform Jews, we remain more people-centered than Orthodox Judaism.

The first affirmation—God's reality in our lives—is more of a problem to Reform Jewish thinkers today than is the parallel emphasis on man. The older Reform Judaism could be content to speak of God in icily impersonal terms. Today, such language would imply that we, created in God's image, ought to be impersonal as God is impersonal. No wonder our relationship to God, in that understanding, was necessarily a rather formal and distant one. No wonder the older Reform Judaism seemed cold. Yet humankind, at its best, knows itself not to be a collection of clever machines, not even incredibly flexible computers. As we are more than our minds and their calculations, so God, who far surpasses us, ought equally to be far more than an impersonal energy or process or idea.

To speak of God in essentially ethical terms, as some of our Reform forebears did, at least speaks to the moral dimension of our humanity. But a person is more than a moral agent, though being ethical is essential to being human. In openness to others, in facing up to our finitude, in learning to accept our limits and to fulfill ourselves precisely through our particularity, we transcend the ethical dimension of being human and reach for true personhood. Our God, then, must be more than an ethical criterion or ideal. God must be at least as conscious, as concerned, as involved, as purposeful, as active as we are when we are at our best. And if God is at least as personal as we are, then our relationship to God needs to be a fully personal one and not confined to the mental or ethical dimension of our lives.

Martin Buber has described this in terms which are by now classic. I can, perhaps, make this notion clear by analogy to an area where much of our relationship with God is acted out, namely, our relationship with our rabbis.

Two generations ago, what we most wanted of our rabbis was that they be cultured. We were happy when they used words we didn't understand, talked about books we hadn't read and opened their jackets so



that we could see, hanging across their black vests, their gleaming, gold Phi Beta Kappa keys. These were the symbols of their validity to us.

A generation back, though we still wanted our rabbis to be scholarly, we were more concerned with their ethical involvements. If the Civil Rights or, later, the Peace Movements were too much for us, then, at least, we expected them to be involved in projects for the aged, the poor and all the other forlorn and forgotten people in our society.

Today, I suggest that, while we still appreciate our rabbi's learning and morality, mostly we want him—or her—to be a *mentsch*. We want rabbis who can talk to people; better yet, we want rabbis who can listen to people. We want rabbis who will be there when we need them—be there personally, not merely present in some professional manner or pastoral technique. We don't want to relate to a role; we want a person.

If we may turn Ludwig Feuerbach on his head, we are not just thinking of our rabbis. We are expressing our intuition of God as well. We are saying—dimly and obscurely, to be sure,—that, to use Buber's language, we sense that God relates to humankind as, in our experience, persons relate to one another—in a love which sets its own rules for proof and validation. We find no love as long as we insist on being detached and analytic. We meet only as we venture forth in wholeness to another. We do not leave our mind and ethics behind but we also do not limit ourselves to either. So our relationship with God includes both—and everything else in us beside. This turn to God is what we moderns call inter-personal and what the Jewish tradition called covenant.

If, then, the special task of the early Reform Jews was to emphasize the role of humankind in religion, then it is clear that the task for our time is to reassert the other half of the covenant relationship—the reality and the nearness of God. Despite all the reasons which mankind gives us with each day's news that we should despair of it, and of ourselves, we insist that we shall yet hope and act. For we know we are not alone or abandoned. God has given us true freedom and real power and we often abuse them. But for all our frailty and infidelity, God's covenant remains in force. Considering how sick at heart and cynical most people are today, faith in God's covenant with us is a powerful and sustaining faith indeed.

A word more is called for on what we may call the sociology of Reform Jewish teaching about universalism. All our discussion about God and humanity-in-general, is shared essentially, not with humanity-in-general, but among Jews. While some non-Jews are occasionally interested in what we have to say about humankind, mostly we say it to one another, that is, to one particular species of the human genus, the urban-centered, college-educated, lower upper-class, cultured, sophisticated, Semitically derived, Israeli loving, minority group called Reform Jews.

I think there are two reasons why the world does not take Reform Judaism's universalism very seriously. First, it is clear to any hard-headed

observer that, while we put it forward as the highest idealism—the unity of God implies the unity of humanity—our passion for this idea is primarily selfish. Our hidden agenda is quite clear: if people treated everyone as equals, they would stop treating Jews as outsiders and inferiors. If they stopped hating those who were different, they would stop hating Jews. So when non-Jews hear us spout universalism they understand us really to be saying, “Let us in.” They are not sure that they want to—and they aren’t sure that once we were part of the System we would be any less discriminatory than they have been. Indeed, there are many signs in our community today that Jews, too, can be quite prejudiced. Our universalism, then, means little to the world, for it seems only another ideology, projecting our selfish interest.

The more important reason why our universalism does not excite humanity is that we Jews really do not have much unique teaching to contribute to the topic. Most of what we have done in such discussions over the decades is to take some image of man created in the general culture—Kant or Dewey in the past; Rollo May or the Esalen Institute today—and, dressing it up with Biblical or rabbinic quotations, often gerrymandered, we proclaim it to be the Jewish view of man. A simple historical view of traditional Jewish literature indicates that while there is some sense of man-in-general there, it is slight in content and peripheral to what our prophets and sages mainly knew about: God’s covenant with the Jewish People. I do not presume to downgrade the first ten chapters of Genesis, but they are a tiny part of the Torah; and while some of our literature seems universal in outlook, our prophets are concerned almost exclusively with the Household of Israel, as are our historians. Of the 63 tractates of the Mishnah, none is devoted to humankind in general. Not even all of our medieval philosophical classics, for all their appeal to universal standards of reason, can bring themselves to deny a unique, rather than a merely distinctive, Jewish relationship with God. And the mystic books carry this particularism to bold and perhaps bizarre lengths.

I am not saying that there is no universalism in classic Judaism, but, only, that such ideas were substantially marginal to traditional Jewish interest rather than central to it. Not until the 19th century, when Jews needed to give religious justification for their participation in general society, did the implicit Jewish doctrine of humanity become explicit. The Reform Jewish leaders of the 19th century were largely responsible for this. Theirs was a critically important accomplishment for a time when the major question about Judaism was whether it permitted Jews to be part of humanity as a whole. And as long as we propose to be full participants in our society this universalistic teaching must, somehow, be included in every interpretation of authentic modern Jewishness.

Surely, however, that does not mean that the agenda of Jewry in

the 19th century remains our agenda today. If Reform Judaism has contributed anything to Jewish thought it is the idea that substantial changes in social circumstance require changes in religious obligation. In today's world, do Jews need a Reform Jewish emphasis on universalism? Does the world need it?

Jews today require little instruction in how to be at home in the modern world. One look at the way we live proclaims us fully acculturated. Inter-marriage, not ghetto-mindedness, is our major Jewish problem. For Reform Judaism, in such a time, to give its energies to showing how Jews can be people-in-general is to make itself superfluous. Of course, I believe that to be a Jew is also to be a person-in-general and, of course, I think it a worthy thing in an inhuman time to help people achieve greater humanity. But, if Jews devote their major efforts to helping people become persons, where will the committed Jews come from? Our danger today is far more the loss of our Jewishness than of our humanity. What we need to know, what no social agency beside the synagogue will teach us, is what God wants of us as Jews. The reassertion of a healthy particularism, not the reiteration of our quite familiar universalism, is the chief item on our contemporary Jewish agenda.

Humanity, too, has little need of Reform Jewish teaching about universalism. America can learn from Freud and Fromm and Maslow without taking their Jewish origins into account. It knows more and does more in creating social welfare programs and arousing local community activism than the synagogue ever could hope to match.

The truth is that what Judaism, any Judaism, can uniquely do today is to reinforce the Jew's sense of Covenant with God as a member of the Household of Israel. Every worship service brings the Jewish folk into God's presence in pledge and renewal. Every Jewish ritual which we perform renews our ties with our people and our participation in its millennial bond to God. Every trip to the State of Israel, every gift to its people, every act for its welfare, unites us afresh with the Land on which we first understood the meaning of our Covenant as we sought to create a society in its terms. Every year's cycle of our calendar make us personal participants in the Exodus, law-giving and wilderness guidance that created our ancient, perennial Covenant with God. And every time we, a relatively faithless generation, create a new form in which modern Jews transcend their isolated, fragmented lives and find themselves gathered in Jewish community, faithful again, in a new way, to the God of our ancestors, we show that the Covenant lives and its messianic aspiration retains historic power.

I am aware—indeed, as the editor of a journal devoted to debating Jewish affairs I am often made painfully aware—of the dangers that may be aroused by a call for a turn to particularism. In the present crisis many Jews feel utterly impotent to assure Jewish survival. Their consequent

bitterness toward the world brings them to say things about other people—and sometimes to act in ways—that are sinful. Similar words used by non-Jews toward Jews would be considered outrageous anti-Semitism. An ethic which has substantially different standards for members of our tribe and for those outside it, can hardly be called an ethic. Our need for a vital particularism must not become an excuse for simple ethnocentrism. We Jews are not above ethical regression and are not as saintly as we would like others to believe. We must be on guard lest we seek to live by the attitudes of the ghetto while seeking to reap every benefit from a democratic social order. Here, indeed, Reform Jewish universalism has much to teach us. Judaism mandates duties to all humanity as well as to our own people. We neglect the general social welfare only at great peril to our souls.

Yet, despite the great need to keep our universal ethical responsibility alive and active, it is our Jewish particularity, the special Jewish relationship between God and the Jewish people, which must now be our first priority. It has its hazards, to be sure, but they are hardly as great as the one which arises when we stress universalism, namely, that we seem, thereby, to legitimate assimilation. Today, I have no doubt, that is a far greater danger to God's Covenant with the People of Israel than our potential clannishness is likely to be.

The higher truth, of course, is that if we could see the Covenant in full perspective, we would recognize that our concentration on an intense, particular, Jewish existence is, in fact, our special way of being of service to all humanity. For if we would sink our roots into our Jewishness as far as they would go, then we would have gained the ground and the nurture to reach out in the fullest, most persistent service to all humanity.

No person of our time has so well epitomized the roundedness of Covenantal existence as did Abraham Heschel. Most other Jews responded to only part of Jewish obligation. The universalists demonstrated for civil rights and protested the Viet Nam War, while the particularists took up the cause of Soviet Jewry and organized to protect the State of Israel. Rarely were the two groups united in common action. Abraham Heschel knew that to limit oneself to one side of Jewish duty is to belittle one's Jewish being. For all his depth of Jewish learning and observance and piety, Heschel was a man of the world. And for all his outreach to God's creatures, he was, unequivocally, a Jew.

I do not deny, then, that there is some virtue in discussing, from time to time, what we mean by the covenant between God and humanity. But I think it vastly more important for this generation of Reform Jews to turn its attention to what they understand to be the continuing reality of the Covenant between God and the Jewish People, and what, in fact, they propose to do about living it.

# *Reform Judaism: Evolution and the Stork*

NORMAN MIRSKY

OF ALL THE ATTRIBUTES ASSOCIATED WITH THE "Judaean-Christian" tradition, those which come to mind most readily involve the human body. Rabbinic Judaism not only regulates the sexual activities of the Jew but also restricts his choice of food and drink, presents him with a need for ritual bathing, and even goes so far as to provide him with a benediction to be recited after he eliminates bodily wastes.

Traditional Christianity, too, pays much attention to the body. It constantly warns of the temptations of the flesh and bids the true believer, through ritual and through identification with the crucified Christ, to rid himself of the body he has had since birth and to be born again in Christ.

It seems odd, therefore, that Reform Judaism, heavily influenced by both Rabbinic Judaism and the Christianity of the last 150 years, has paid so little attention to the wants and needs of the body. For if it has been true of Rabbinic Judaism that it leaves no human activity unregulated, and of Christianity that it sees the behavior of the body as having a great deal to do with the status of the soul, it is equally true that Reform Judaism seems nearly totally unmindful of man as a physical being.

One searches in vain through the annals of Reform thought for more than the vaguest references—even these are rare—to the human body. The traditional synagogal liturgy is rich in allusions both to external and internal organs. It provides instructions for various bends of the knee, for prostration before the Ark, for wrapping the head and arm in phylacteries, and for covering the torso of a male worshipper with a prayer shawl. By contrast, the Reform liturgy eliminates nearly every reference to human organs, presents man as having a head only, and provides instruction only as to when one should stand, sit, speak, and be silent.

Nevertheless, the Reform movement has constantly taken a liberal position on the rights of workers, the equality of the sexes, and such matters as birth control and abortion. Reform Judaism cannot be accused of indifference to the plight of man when that plight includes oppression of the body. But Reform is guilty of indifference—or more precisely perhaps embarrassment—when confronted with the body in other than political and socio-economic terms.

---

NORMAN MIRSKY is associate professor of human relations and contemporary Jewish thought at HUC-JIR. He is also a rabbi, and has a doctorate from Brandeis University.

From what does this peculiar attitude stem? It is my contention that it grows out of the peculiar milieu into which Reform was born and in which, more than a century later, it is still most comfortable. This means that Reform was created as a religion for generally upper-middle-class men and women who wished to remain Jewish but did not wish to appear significantly different from upper-middle-class men and women who were not Jewish. To a great extent, this is still true. What has changed are the values of the upper-middle classes, which now call into question certain attitudes not previously the object of much thought.

Reform was born into an age of reason, an age when mind was believed to be on the brink of conquering matter. It was a period when each man was conceded liberty to have his own thoughts, but when a great deal of attention was paid to public comportment. Manners were formal, dress was stiff, and sex was unmentionable in polite company.

In short, the age of reason was an age when reasonable people were expected to elevate their minds and to leave their bodies to science. I don't mean that they literally were expected to bequeath their bodies to science but, rather, were expected to relegate the discussion of physical matters to those who could safely cope with them; namely, those skilled in the biological sciences. It was an age which gave humanity both the theory of evolution and the stork who delivered babies *ex nihilo*.

Historically, therefore, Reform came into being at a time of philosophical idealism, in an age when reason was triumphant and the formalities of behavior and prudery were in full flower. It remained for an atheistic Viennese Jew, Sigmund Freud, to rescue the human body from the grip of reason—for that is what Freud did with his discovery of the unconscious and its roots in human biological drives. But Reform has had surprisingly little to do, intellectually speaking, with psychoanalysis. This has been true for a number of reasons. First, in *The Future of An Illusion*, Freud maintained that the idea of a liberal religion was impossible. Religion, he argued, could not cater to the "primitive" emotional needs of the believer while at the same time rationally debunking the myths and rituals which met those needs. Reform Judaism based many of its claims to Jewish authenticity on its ability to study Judaism scientifically, laying emphasis on the social outlook of the Hebrew prophets, and deemphasized the roles of customs, ceremonies, myths, and rituals. It was, if Freud was correct, highly vulnerable.

Beyond that, the pessimism in Freud's sociological writings about the future of the human race conflicted with the optimism of Reform theologians. Reform preached that a new world was upon us, a messianic era; Freud wrote that there was no guarantee that Thanatos would be conquered by Eros.

Finally,—at the heart of psychoanalytic therapy—is the matter of the individual man's struggle to free his mind and body from the irrational

controls of both id and superego. Reform simply refused to acknowledge the existence of this struggle, since it implied that man was, by nature, not a rational being but was, at birth, a lusty, pleasure-seeking animal who had to be tamed through repression. This smacked too much of the Christian doctrine of original sin and spoke too contemptuously of the creature who was but little lower than the angels. Thus, while psychoanalytic theory could have provided a means by which Reform rediscovered the human body, it was bypassed for a pseudo-Marxism which seemed more compatible with the Reform view of man and society.

However, even if the Reformers had recognized that psychoanalysis could have helped them to a more complete understanding of man as a being with *both* a body *and* a mind, there is a fundamental reason why Reform had to prefer a more one-sided approach to man. This is what we might call the *decorum factor*. Although at first glance this factor appears trivial, an understanding of how people behave in public, as described particularly in the writings of Edward Hall, Erving Goffman, and Philip Slater,<sup>1</sup> will demonstrate its importance.

When one examines the documents surrounding the earliest attempts at reforming Judaism, even going as far back as Israel Jacobson's first reformist institution, one is struck by the crucial nature of the decorum issue. In his *Prayer Book Reform in Europe*, Professor J. J. Petuchowski says:

Side by side with the publication of Reformed Prayerbooks and in many instances preceding such publication there arose, at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, the literature of *Synagogenordnungen*. The German word . . . means synagogue order and it carries the implication both of authoritative pronouncements and of the order and decorum which the Reformers wanted to see in the synagogue.<sup>2</sup>

In 1810, the Consistory of the Israelites of the Kingdom of Westphalia issued a 24-page edict concerning behavior in the synagogue.

Paragraph 5: "The knocking on the doors and the calling out in the streets, which is customary in several congregations as a sign of the impending worship service, must altogether cease. Instead, the congregations must follow the times of services which will be determined by their rabbi without approval . . ."

Paragraph 6: "Everybody should be dressed as cleanly and as decently as possible when appearing in the synagogue. The prayer leader, in particular, must be decently attired."<sup>3</sup>

In 1838, in Wuerttemberg, similar rules were passed. I quote some of them:

1. Erving Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places* (New York: The Free Press, 1963).  
Edward Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1966).  
— *The Silent Language* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).  
Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
2. Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe* (New York: World Union For Progressive Judaism, 1968), p. 105.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 108.



The synagogue should be entered with decorum and without noise. He who enters must immediately go to his seat and remain in it as quietly as possible. The sexton should direct foreign Israelites to seats. Any walking around or standing together within the synagogue is prohibited on pain of punishment . . . As being offensive to the decorum and to the dignity of the worship service, the practice of the following customs is no longer permitted in the synagogue: (a) the kissing of the curtain on entering the synagogue or during the service; (b) leaving one's seat in order to kiss the Scroll of the Law; (c) the knocking during the reading of the Book of Esther on the feast of Purim; (d) the malkoth-beating on the eve of the Day of Atonement; (e) the noisy beating of hosanoth on the 7th day of Tabernacles; (f) sitting on the floor on the fast of the Ninth of Ab; (g) removing shoes and boots in the synagogue on that day; (h) the procession with the Torah which is still the practice in some localities on the eve of Rejoicing in the Law; (i) the procession of the children with flags and candles on that festival; (j) the distribution of food and drink in the synagogue on that festival in localities where it is still taking place.<sup>4</sup>

One could cite pages and pages of similar regulations passed by various Reform Jewish groups in Central Europe. Basically, these rules center around two themes. Their intention is to fix a time for worship and to make certain the worshipper remains quietly in his seat until the service ends. But it was not the 19th-century German Reformers alone who passed rules on decorum. In 1964, the Central Conference of American Rabbis' committee on guide for synagogue decorum issued a lengthy set of rules, some of which are excerpted below. For example:

The Bar Mitzvah, as a son of duty, attests by his participation in the Sabbath Service that he . . . will continue as a more mature young man to fulfill his obligation as a loyal Jew. . . . Its full religious significance must in no way be diminished by the festivities which surround the event.

We are troubled that, concurrent with the raising of standards in preparation for Bar Mitzvah, there has been a steady and alarming deterioration in the character of the Bar Mitzvah "affair." The *extravagant consumption*, the *conspicuous waste*, and the *crudity* of many of these affairs are rapidly becoming a public Jewish scandal. The Bar Mitzvah party is not entirely a private affair. It is associated with a religious event, and as such should reflect the values of the Jewish religion. When these standards are abandoned, the good name of the Jewish community is lowered, and the value of the Bar Mitzvah itself is called into question.

Judaism stands for the sane and dignified conduct of life. Judaism insists upon good taste, decency, and modesty. It is the Torah that limits freedom of choice for those who, in our free society, choose to accept and be loyal to it. The lowering of standards as reflected in many Bar Mitzvah celebrations is in direct violation of the teaching of the Torah. The trend toward the abandonment of aesthetic standards can lead to the abandonment of ethical standards as well (p. 60) [italics added].

Such words as "extravagant consumption," "conspicuous waste," "good taste," and the warning that the bar mitzvah reception is public, i.e., likely to be attended by non-Jews, all indicate that even today decorum

4. Ibid., pp. 113-114.

is a central issue in Reform Judaism. The CCAR raises it to the level of a religious obligation, rare in a movement that makes few demands of its members. Whence this obsession with order, decorum, punctuality, and unostentatious behavior? In his two books, *The Silent Language* and *The Hidden Dimension*, Edward Hall gives us more than a clue. Although he does not write about Jews, Hall does write about the ways in which those people among whom American Jews do live manage time and space. He points out that, with regard to time, punctuality down to the minute, and even the second, is a by-product of industrialized countries. Furthermore, Hall makes a distinction between monochronic and dichronic time. In industrialized countries, it is expected of those who behave properly that they will engage in only one activity at a time. Other cultures, particularly non-Western ones, find it perfectly acceptable for a person to do two or more things at the same time. The East European Orthodox Jewish service provides a good example of the dichronic use of time. In an Orthodox *shul*, once a *minyan* is formed and once the service has gotten underway, it is perfectly proper to engage in other activities, such as a discussion of the day's news. Furthermore, unless one is regularly a part of the original *minyan*, it is not considered impolite to come late. This use of time is alien to Western standards of proper conduct. Thus, from the point of view of a religious movement which is seeking to become Westernized, the traditional Jewish use of dichronic time is offensive.

In *The Hidden Dimension*, which is about the use of space in various cultures, Hall again illumines the reason why decorum became so important to Reform. In the Moslem East and in East European countries like Poland, the attitude toward how space should be used in public differs radically from that of Western lands like Germany, England, and America. In the East, public space is thoroughly public. An Arab who finds the theater filled thinks nothing of leaning over the occupant of a seat until the occupant becomes so uncomfortable that he gets up. In the market place, a Pole would simply not understand, much less respect, the first-come-first-served rule. He would push his way ahead of as many people as he could. Furthermore, in public there is no restriction on how close a person should get to another person. Touching is not considered a breach of good conduct. Jews used to this Eastern allocation of public space clash radically with those in the West who carefully maintain a distance between themselves and the next person. Hence, Jews new to Western culture will inevitably appear pushy and rude. In addition, since in the East one is permitted in public to carry on a conversation audible to everyone else within a given area, it is likely that a Jewish newcomer to Western culture would sound overly loud. He does not have the same orientation toward privacy in public as does a Westerner. Thus, Jews—most of whom even in the West are of Eastern origin—are

often considered loud. Through Hall we come to understand three attributes which “boorish” Jews are said to possess—so-called “Jewish” time which is imprecise, “Jewish” pushiness, and “Jewish” loudness.

In all the regulations concerning order and decorum, from 1810 until the present, we see not only attempts to get Jews to observe Western rules of time and space—but something more: it is not just the rules of the Western world in general, but the rules of Western upper-middle classes. From the vantagepoint of time and space management, the East European Jew had a difficult road to travel before he came to resemble those native members of the upper-middle classes. There could be no two institutions more antithetical in their management of time and space than the upper-class Protestant church of Germany and America and the *shul* of the Eastern European Orthodox Jew. To the extent that it can be argued that religious institutions attempt to embody the most cherished values of a society, to that extent it must be admitted that the upper-class Protestant church has more in common with a theater than with a *shul* and that a *shul* has more in common with what in the West is considered an informal gathering place than with a Protestant church. In a theater, when an event is scheduled, it begins at a precise time, and the members of the audience are seated far enough away from one another so that no one need touch another. Unless one is seated on an aisle, it is usually difficult and embarrassing to have to leave for even the most urgent of reasons. Furthermore, once the performance begins, it is supposed to occupy the full attention of the audience, and unless there is a particularly startling performance, the audience is expected to participate only by applauding and even then only at scheduled times. When the performance is completed, the audience is expected to leave the premises within a reasonably short length of time. I need hardly mention that what Goffman calls “creature releases” such as belching, breaking wind, or even loud yawning are totally inappropriate and must be confined to rooms designated for such needs. In short, both the Protestant church service and the theater are examples of what Goffman calls a tight situation: “Here each person present may be obliged to show constant orientation to the gathering as a whole and constant devotion to the spirit of the occasion as expressed through all the avenues suggested.”<sup>5</sup>

For a variety of reasons, an East European Orthodox *shul* provides the setting for a loose gathering. In a *shul*, one need not be too precise in observing the stipulated starting time. One is not late even if he arrives twenty-five minutes or more past the announced beginning. Furthermore, although it is desired, in a *shul* there is no reason to focus all of one’s attention on the main purpose for the gathering. Instead, after initial formalities are concluded, one is free (though not encouraged) to stand

---

5. Goffman, *Op. cit.*, p. 199.

or sit, to move around, to engage whomever one chooses in conversation, to talk above a whisper even to the point where one's conversation can be overheard by others not in that conversation. One is also freer to meet his creature needs, either through an easy exit to the bathroom, or through the use of some sort of shielding, like a hand to cover a yawn or a handkerchief to cover a sneeze. One need not be embarrassed by these shielded creature releases as one would be during a church service or a theatrical performance. In many ways the *shul*, with its loose seating arrangements, its tolerance of dichronic time, and its lack of concern for exits and shielded creature releases, contrasts violently with Western notions of decorum and propriety.

Along with decorum, let us also deal with the differences between the *shul* and the Temple in matters of the segregation of the sexes. Orthodox Judaism does not allow men and women to sit together when worshipping. In the old East European—or, for that matter, in any Orthodox—*shul*, women usually sit behind a curtained balcony where they are as free as are the men to engage in conversation while the service goes on. It is interesting to speculate on why Judaism chose to segregate the sexes during religious services. In traditional Jewish society at large, women were expected to avoid the company of men, and vice versa. With some of the insights given us by anthropologists, we may offer an explanation for this phenomenon. In most societies, though less in those inhabited by Northwestern Europeans, the mingling of the sexes was viewed as highly provocative. The outcome of any unchaperoned meeting between a man and woman would surely be a sexual encounter between the two! Hence, out of respect for the sex drive, Mediterranean and Oriental societies provided external controls over the meeting of boys and girls and of men and women. The strict segregation of the sexes in Judaism is, undoubtedly, part of this system of external controls. In Western society, each individual is expected to have internalized a control over his or her sex drive. The sexes are expected to mingle quite freely, but they are not expected to engage each other in sexual activity. By and large, even in the West, mingling of the sexes was to take place under highly formalized and highly ritualized circumstances. To use Goffman's term, the mingling was to take place in a tight gathering. But there are gatherings which are looser. In these gatherings, it is common to find that the men gather together and that the women form circles of their own. If a man and a woman choose to be together, it is generally at the periphery of the gathering. Just as in an Orthodox *shul*, men and women mingled outside the space allotted for worship.

What we find, then, is that in Orthodoxy there is a looseness of gatherings which involves, in the case of the liturgy, no attempt to avoid the issue of the human body, but does involve the segregation of the sexes; whereas, in the Protestant and Protestantized religions of Western

culture, we find tight gatherings, no references to the human body, and a free mingling of the sexes. With these facts in mind we are led to a better understanding of Reform's apparent denial of the human body and its life-long obsession with order and decorum.

Reform Judaism—and, later, Conservative Judaism—has been faced with the task, since its inception, of trying to get Jews who were socialized into one set of norms about public behavior to abandon them in favor of a nearly opposite set of behavioral norms. Not only this, but they have been faced with attempting this task through modification of the institution which, traditionally, has embodied all the old norms: the synagogue.

If we view the synagogue as an agency of socialization, we get a better perspective on the issues being discussed. It is impossible not to see, first, the Reform and, then, the Conservative synagogue, as being the agency through which millions of Jews have passed on their journey from the *shtetlakh* of Europe into the upper-middle classes of Western society. Its rules of decorum, its emphasis on solemnity and dignity in worship, its urging that ostentation be avoided and that excesses of any type be shunned, its Rabbi who speaks the language of the culture, are all indicative of the socializing role which the non-Orthodox synagogues have played since their beginnings. It is difficult to imagine a Tevya singing "If I Were a Rich Man" in a liberal synagogue, or a Zero Mostel who, in the Mel Brooks movie "The Producers," shouts out of the window to a man in a Cadillac convertible with his arms around a blonde, "If you got it, flaunt it!" The mention of money (filthy lucre) or any other dirty subject has no place in a bastion of upper-middle class sacred values. It is probable that at this time, when the synagogue is no longer needed as a socializer into Western society, when the society, as a whole, has come to a more realistic view of the needs of the human body, when informality has become a respectable mode of behavior, and when men and women have come to see religion as a vehicle for personal expression and celebration, that the Reform approach to religion is in serious trouble.

There has been within the rubric of traditional Judaism the potential to embrace the religion-seeking human being. Judaism has been a viable counter-culture. It is to be hoped that this potential is not lost.

It is worthwhile noting that the religious ritual most popular with youths in the Reform movement is that of *Havdalah*. *Havdalah* was intended as a ceremony to mark the end of the *Shabbat* and the beginning of the secular week. However, we find that *Havdalah* is meaningful even to those who have not observed the Sabbath. The reason for the popularity of the ceremony is clear, as is the fact that it is among the youth that one finds it celebrated.

The *Havdalah* ceremony, with the wine, the several-wicked candle, the spice box, the clasp of one's neighbor during the singing of songs, involves nearly every human sense. It is visually, olfactorily and tactually

stimulating. It appeals to the sense of taste as well. It stands in stark contrast to the normal Reform ritual which is void of any sensual stimulation and which reeks of decorum.

Those concerned with revitalizing the liturgical appeal of the liberal synagogue would do well to explore the popularity of the *Havdalah* ceremony. They also must be open to the fact that, as a religious movement, Reform has an obligation to take every aspect of humanity into account.

A religion that lacks a body is one that lacks soul and is one that is soon likely to lack souls.

**From Israel, By Jet . . .**

— THE JERUSALEM  
**POST**  
— WEEKLY OVERSEAS EDITION —



*Airmailed every Tuesday from Jerusalem, this renowned English language newspaper will help you better understand and anticipate tomorrow's headlines from Israel and the Middle East.*

**1 YEAR \$25 • 2 YEARS \$45 • 3 YEARS \$65**

----- MAIL COUPON TODAY -----

To: The Jerusalem Post Weekly  
Suite 506, 104 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016

Please send THE JERUSALEM POST WEEKLY to:

Name

Address  Zip

☐ CHECK IS ENCLOSED.   ☐ PLEASE BILL ME. J

# *The Doctrine of Separation*

SOL ROTH

THE PRINCIPLE OF HAVDALAH AFFIRMS THE SEPARATION of Israel from the nations. Its Biblical source is the phrase, "and I have separated you from other people,"<sup>1</sup> and it is a theme that recurs regularly in the religious life of the Jew. For example, the doctrine of separation is recalled every Saturday night in the recitation of the *havdalah*.

This doctrine is not a popular one. The present thrust in the religious community, at least doctrinally, is towards unity and ecumenism. Religious groups are seeking common ground; the reduction, perhaps the elimination, of differences—and the formation of new associations. The Jewish doctrine of separation obviously needs justification.

It is our purpose to exhibit separation as an ineradicable character of human existence; to urge that the separation that is the result of the application of the Jewish concept of community is a necessary condition of Jewish survival; and to argue that the goal of separation is attainable even in an open society.

## I

Among the sources of separation in human relations are a) individuality, b) commitment, c) hostility.

a) Separation, in the first place, is an inevitable consequence of the metaphysical fact of individuality. This type of separation is expressed in the phenomena of differentiation, uniqueness and privacy.

Differentiation means that an experience is always related to a single entity—the I or ego. Perceptions, conceptions, emotions and volitions are identified as *belonging* to an ego—each one speaks of *his* thought, *his* pain, *his* love, *his* desire, etc.—in the sense that these are the experiences of one and no other ego. Someone else may apprehend something that is similar in character but, in the last analysis, experiences are bounded by an ego. Among these experiences are needs, wants and corresponding satisfactions. The fact of differentiation implies that individual needs must receive individual satisfaction. Only *my* eating will satisfy *my* hunger; only the realization of *my* objectives will satisfy *my* hopes. One may be aware of another's needs and gain pleasure from their satisfaction—a mother, for example, is gratified when her child's

1. *Leviticus* 20; 26.

---

SOL ROTH is *president of the New York Board of Rabbis, visiting professor of philosophy at Yeshiva University, and rabbi of the Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach.*



pains are alleviated—but to be aware of another's experiences and to respond emotionally because of that awareness, is not to have the experience. Satisfaction cannot be other than individual. A single work of art may bring gratification to many; a single body of water may quench the thirst of a multitude. But each fulfillment is singular.

Uniqueness, the second component in the concept of individuality, refers to the sum total of man's characteristics and the totality of his experiences. The collection of traits that describe an individual is unique in that it is to be found in no other person. Each of the traits may be universal, that is, it may be exemplified in many instances. Many are rational; many are citizens of Athens; many love dialogue; and we may suppose that not a few died by drinking hemlock. But the combination of these traits, consisting of both qualities and events, is to be found only in a single individual, namely, Socrates. But even more important is the fact that the sum total of man's experiences is unique. Single thoughts, perceptions, volitions and emotions may be universal. Many perceive the Empire State Building and, at different times, even from the same perspective; many exhibit love, even for the same object. The totality of such experiences in the biography of an individual, however, is unique. A classic philosopher, Leibniz, expressed this view in the declaration that human beings are monads, that the life of a monad consists of an unfolding sequence of perceptions, and that no two monads are ever alike.<sup>2</sup> The uniqueness of an individual, therefore, is based, on the one hand, on the totality of exemplified traits and, on the other, on his very life construed as a sequence of experiences.

Privacy, the next ingredient in the concept of individuality, means that no one has direct access to another's thoughts and wishes, dreams and feelings. At best, they may be inferred from his overt behavior. The inner life of each person constitutes a large domain of privacy.

The law grants recognition to these components of individuality by legislating privacy into a right. The laws of every society provide, even if they fail to guarantee, a domain of privacy to every individual. They prescribe boundaries which, under certain conditions, may not be violated. Even if a society will refuse to legitimize private property, it will, for example, recognize the right of privacy in the home and forbid—with some exceptions, perhaps—its invasion. Each person needs a domain of privacy in which he can attend to the fulfillment of personal needs. That domain may be large or small. Its dimensions may be expanded, as in a democratic society, or restricted, as in totalitarian society; but it cannot be entirely eliminated. The need for separation is rooted in the very nature of man.

---

2. Cf. "The Monadology" in *Leibniz*, ed. P. Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 533f.

The character of individuality, thus, renders the separation of each person from every other inevitable. As much as two people will try to merge their lives and to mold them into a single entity—though they may, indeed, respond sympathetically to each other's passions and volitions—they will still, at bottom, remain apart. A biological crisis for one will be the basis for a psychological—not a biological—crisis for the other. The death of one will not normally be accompanied by the demise of the other. Freud testifies to a unity achieved in love. He writes:

But towards the outer world at any rate the ego seems to keep itself clearly and sharply outlined and delimited. There is only one state of mind in which it fails to do this. At its height the state of being in love threatens to obliterate the boundaries between ego and object. Against all evidence of his senses, the man in love declares that he and his beloved are one and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact.<sup>3</sup>

But however one will interpret this sensed unity of love, it will remain a unity of diversity, a unity of separated entities.

The character of relatedness which is also part of the human personality does not, in any way, mitigate the force and significance of its individual quality. The fact that *a* is a friend of *b*, or *a* is married to *b*, or *a* is the father of *b* means, primarily, that *a* and *b* are mutually sources of influence upon each other. It means that what *a* does frequently has consequences beyond his personal life and that, living as we do in a causal world, the inevitable effects of human actions are not limited to their authors. It does not mean that the individual dimension of the human personality has been obliterated. Martin Buber characterized only the I-Thou encounter as real.<sup>4</sup> This means that reality is to be found (a) only in relations and (b) only in relations of the I-Thou (as distinguished from the I-It) variety. It would seem that, according to Buber, man's character of individuality must be consigned to the realm of appearance and irrelevance. In point of fact, Buber uses the word "real" exclusively as a value term. He merely prefers that aspect of human existence which comes under the heading of the I-Thou encounter. If "real" is assigned the metaphysical sense, that is, if it is used to refer, not to preferences, but to aspects of existence, then both individuality and relatedness must be identified as equally real components of human personality.

b) Separation is also due to commitment. It takes the forms of isolation and incompatibility. When two individuals adopt contradictory value schemes, their activities keep them removed from, and in opposition to, each other. A Zionist and an anti-Zionist cannot work together vis-à-vis the Jewish State. The result is relative isolation—that is, each

3. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 3-4.

4. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 63.

will chose to remain apart from the other, and opposition—that is, the activities of one will tend to counteract those of the others.

This is precisely the kind of separation that, from the Jewish standpoint, is characteristic of community, but the details of this later. For the present, it should be noted that this variety of separation is an inevitable concomitant of cultural pluralism. If one accepts the doctrine, as Americans are wont to do, that it is desirable for people with incompatible cultural identities to live together under the same national banner, he must grant that diverse cultural groups will, to one degree or another, depending on the extent of cultural inconsistency, remain apart—for different cultures normally express contradictory schemes of value. The endorsement of cultural pluralism, therefore, implies the acceptance of the notion of *havdalah*.

c) One form of separation is, indeed, objectionable, namely, the separation that is manifested in hostility, in war. The Jew dreams of the Messiah and prays for universal peace to express the hope that this form of separation will ultimately be eliminated from the experience of mankind. The unpopularity of any doctrine that advocates division stems from the fact that an extreme form of it shows up in the enterprise of human conflict. But separation is an ineradicable character of human experience. Even if it were possible to eliminate the incompatibility that is due to cultural division, it is impossible to remove the differentiation that is due to individuality. Even if it were possible to nullify the bases for the wars of fanaticism (resulting from an *extreme* form of commitment), it is not possible to eradicate the roots of the wars of imperialism (which arise from the *extreme* urge to satisfy needs normally associated with individuality). It is the extreme versions of separation that are a curse; in moderation, and under certain conditions, separation may well be a blessing.

## II

The separation of community takes two forms—one is *incompatibility* and the other is *isolation*. To clarify these forms of separation, it is necessary to define the notion of community. Different conceptions of community are distinguishable in the light of the purpose they are construed as serving. A necessary feature of every community is, obviously, a group of people living in approximately the same geographic location and in association with each other. When the question of the purpose of those associations is raised, different replies are forthcoming. An ancient thinker directs attention to the dependence of one human being on another.<sup>5</sup> Within an association it is possible to institute a division of labor which results in efficient and expert production of necessary

5. Plato, *The Republic*, Book II.

commodities, with the consequent improvement in the quality of life. A modern philosopher believes that only in association—and specifically only in those of the I-Thou type—can a human being encounter ultimate reality.<sup>6</sup> The classic Jewish conception is that such an association provides the means of preserving and transmitting values. When all conform to the same patterns of behavior, when every one exemplifies in action identical values, each strengthens in the other the attitudes that his own actions express.

Community, in the Jewish perspective, must, therefore, be understood primarily in terms of cultural environment which, when it enforces desired attitudes, assures spiritual survival in the same way that a friendly physical environment is the condition of biological survival.

This idea of community is central to the religion of the Jew. Prayer is primarily an affair of community and, when properly performed, requires a *minyan*. The consecration of a marriage is also a communal event (it must take place in the presence of a *minyan*);<sup>7</sup> so is the *bris*. One reason for the demand that even religious acts, which are usually held to be personal and appropriately private, be performed in the context of community is that each of these occasions provides an opportunity for the enforcement of specific attitudes and the emphasis of articulated values. When properly practiced, they contribute to the preservation of the character of the community.

This idea of community is also implicit in the concept of *Kiddush Hashem*, the sanctification of the Name of God. Talmudic sages recognized the fact that the action of an individual has an impact upon others—hence, it either strengthens community or is detrimental to it. Thus, if a Jew is threatened with death unless he violates a Biblical precept, then, with very few exceptions, he may yield to the hostile will and avoid the tragic consequences. If the demand, however, is for public transgression (a *minyan* is present), intended to weaken the community's resolve and to break its spirit of resistance, he must submit to the ultimate sacrifice and sanctify the Name of God.<sup>8</sup>

The rabbinic concept of *Mar'it Ha-ayin* expresses the very same concern with the preservation of community. The performance of an intrinsically harmless act which could be misconstrued with harmful con-

6. Buber, *Op. cit.*

7. The traditional Jewish marriage ceremony consists of two parts. One is called *Ayrusin*; the other, *Nissuin*. The former includes the recitation of two blessings and the declaration of the groom to the bride at the time when he places a ring on her finger. The latter consists, among other things, of the *Sheva Berakhot*, the seven blessings. In *Shulhan Arukh, Even Haezer* (34-4) we learn that a *minyan* is preferable, but not mandatory, for the blessings of *Ayrusin*. In the same code (62-4) we are told that a *minyan* is required for the seven blessings of *Nissuin*. The commentary, *Bet Shmuel*, records a dispute as to whether *Nissuin* performed without a *minyan* is binding.

8. Cf. Maimonides, *Yad, "Hilkhot Yesodei Hatorah,"* V, 1-2.

sequences to Jewish observance is, on that very ground, forbidden. The implication is that every individual act must be estimated in terms of its impact on the community because, in general, an individual act performed in community has social consequences as well.

Well, what traits must a community imprint on the minds and personalities of its members in order to introduce incompatibility into their relations with those beyond its boundaries? There are several types. One is psychological; another is intellectual; a third is behavioral; still another results from commitment.<sup>9</sup>

Cultures are fundamental to human life. They are among the determinants of human nature; they are also sources of incompatibility in human relations. What to the Greek was an object of beauty requiring an act of reverence was, to Jewish perception, the kind of sacrilege that called for an act of destruction. The idea of divine intervention is alien to a secular perspective, as the notion of causal determination is inadequate in the religious perspective. An instance of bigamy arouses anger and hostility in a monogamous society, but is admired in a polygamous society. The decision to accumulate wealth is praised in a capitalistic state but condemned in one that is communistic. Cultures are expressed in languages which provide the scheme of categories in terms of which experience is conceived and interpreted. Every individual who perceives himself as belonging to a certain culture will, to one extent or another, be the bearer of values, sentiments, perceptions, conceptions and action patterns that are characteristic of that culture and that are incompatible with those that belong to another.

In the past, many in the Jewish community have pinned their hopes for Jewish survival on psychological incompatibility alone. Expose an individual, they urged, to the Jewish cultural situation—a school, a synagogue, a sequence of Jewish experiences—and permanent psychological marks will be left. These, they argued, will constitute a wall of separation that will suffice to guarantee the preservation of the Jewish community. Each of its members, thus exposed, will have needs and requirements whose fulfillment will, of necessity, keep him within the boundaries of the Jewish people. He will associate with Jews, seek a life's partner from a Jewish family, and respond to the needs of the Jewish community. The argument is not sound; the hope is illusory. Experience has demonstrated that a psychological distinction is not a psychological barrier. The introduction into the Jewish mind of mere psychological differences will not guarantee the achievement of the goal of separation.

9. This classification is not intended to describe mutually exclusive forms of incompatibility. It is obvious, for example, that behavioral differences may be due to either distinguishing psychological traits or diverging commitments. The classification merely identifies characteristics that are emphasized by one or another segment within the Jewish community and which are, in fact, regarded as adequate basis for incompatibility.

Others seek the guarantee of Jewish survival in intellectual incompatibility, in the awareness of the contradiction between Jewish and non-Jewish claims. They argue that the Jew's understanding and perception of the universe differentiates him and, that his ideational scheme, when grasped, generates a wall of separation. In truth, this barricade is no more effective than its psychological counterpart. The mere knowledge of an idea, even when it is coupled with an understanding of its implications, will not produce the desired result. This is obvious.

There are those who argue, however, that knowledge will be translated into commitment and that commitment does constitute an adequate barrier. The first part of this claim is clearly false. It is well known that commitment to value cannot be communicated by a purely theoretical process. It was Plato who, in one of the Socratic dialogues,<sup>10</sup> raised the question whether virtue can be taught and, notwithstanding his pronounced intellectualism, did not give an affirmative reply. The philosopher may analyze the notion of courage but, when his task is done, he may remain the coward. The concepts of Judaism may be exposed to rational inquiry but, when understanding is complete, it need not be accompanied by the acceptance of Jewish values. Obviously, there can be no commitment without a degree of comprehension. One must know, at least in a general way, the idea in which he believes and for which he is willing to take risks. The point is that the explanation of a concept's content will not suffice to produce the attitude of commitment.

The point needs emphasis. The Jewish community has long been identified with the intellectual establishment and Jews are justifiably proud of their love for learning. It may also be granted that knowledge is an indispensable condition of progress. It is not, however, a panacea. It is simply not true that the propagation of Jewish learning will have, as a necessary consequence, the growth of Jewish life. The notion that the building of more schools with emphasis on the communication of theoretical materials will assure the preservation of the Jewish community is but another instance of the intellectualist's fallacy. The intellectualist holds that it is impossible to act in a manner that is inconsistent with one's knowledge. The issue was debated in ancient Athens. It is too obviously mistaken to require refutation.

We seem to take uncritically the doctrine that "Study is great because it leads to performance."<sup>11</sup> We interpret this precept to mean that knowledge is inevitably translated into action. But it is our sad experience, both in the United States and in the State of Israel, that this is simply not the case. Study leads to practice only where there exists a prior commitment. Obviously, where the inclination to comply is present, the degree of performance will depend on the extent of knowledge. One who

10. Plato, *The Protagoras*.

11. Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin*, 40a.

is ignorant of the laws of the Sabbath can hardly abide by halakhic requirements though he may want to. But study does not lead to commitment. Where commitment is weak or totally lacking, the apprehension of an idea will not generate a sense of obligation. In the *Ethics of the Fathers*, it is the act that is judged to be paramount, "Study is not the most important thing, but practice."<sup>12</sup>

What has been said here should not be construed as the view that a knowledge of Judaism is not necessary to preserve community; only that it is not sufficient. We do not suggest that the concepts of Judaism should not be exposed to the light of reason; we merely insist that such exposure does not, and cannot, by itself, instill commitment and the acceptance of Jewish values. Neither psychological nor intellectual distinctiveness suffices to erect a wall of separation that will preserve the Jewish Community. What else, then, is needed?

According to the rabbinic view, the safeguards that must be added are behavioral in character. The method by which effective incompatibility is to be achieved is the introduction into Jewish communal life, in constantly increasing measure, of distinguishing patterns of action, of diverging and isolating modes of behavior. Maimonides summarized this conclusion succinctly. He wrote, "The Jew is warned against imitating non-Jews and instructed to separate himself from them and to render himself recognizable in his garb and his actions as in his thoughts and attitudes."<sup>13</sup>

A contemporary Jewish thinker, Yitzchak Heinemann, in the conclusion to his excellent work on the meaning of the commandments, stressed the need for distinguishing behavioral patterns to preserve Jewish community. He states that, while ancient and medieval Jewish thinkers directed attention to the personal and moral significance of the *mizvot*, modern Jewish philosophers, aware of the threat to Jewish existence that resulted from the emancipation and enlightenment, emphasized their social consequences as well. He quotes the well-known Bible critic, Wellhausen, as saying that only adherence to the *mizvot* assured the survival of the Jewish people.<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the meaning of incompatibility includes not only the negative elements of resistance to, and rejection of, non-Jewish value systems; it also contains the positive ingredient of commitment. The introduction of commitment into the experience of the Jew is, obviously, the primary aim of Jewish life. The committed Jew is loyal to Judaism. His responses do not derive merely from psychological resistance, from intellectual inconsistencies, or from behavioral

12. *Ethics of the Fathers*, Ch. I. Par. 17.

13. *Yad*, "Hilkhoh Avodot Kokhavim" XI, 1.

14. Yitzchak Heinemann, *Taamei Hamizvot Besafrut Yisrael*: (Jerusalem, 1942) II, p. 243.



tensions, but from the act of decision. He has *chosen* Jewish life and that choice implies that he has removed himself from the other alternatives available in a pluralistic society. This type of separation is emphasized in the *Sifra*. Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah states

How do we know that we should not say, "my soul despises the flesh of swine" . . . but that one should say, "I would indeed like it but what can I do since my Father in heaven has imposed these decrees upon me?" Because the Bible states, "I have separated you from the peoples to be for Me" which means that your separation from them should be for My sake.<sup>15</sup>

Consideration should now be given to the second type of separation that has sometimes been urged, and frequently practiced, in Jewish life, namely, isolation. From a purely logical point of view, it would seem obvious that, in the event that two communities conforming to two incompatible cultural patterns clash, if each threatens to exert a corrosive influence on the other, if either group fears a dilution or a deterioration of its own value system, physical and territorial separation would be advisable. It is only when it is possible to erect safeguards to prevent the interpenetration of two value systems that geographic division would appear not to be essential.

This, in fact, has been the Jewish response. Both types of separation—territorial and behavioral; physical isolation, on the one hand, and incompatibility, on the other—are rabbinic demands in relevant circumstances. In the instance of the promised land, for example, rabbinic precepts require territorial separation only from those who are either idolatrous or fail to comply with the minimal requirements of moral behavior. A Jew is prohibited from selling real estate in Israel to a heathen so that he will strike no roots in the holy land.<sup>16</sup> Behavioral distinction alone, however, is demanded in relation to non-idolatrous gentiles who conform to the basic moral requirements. Non-Jews who accepted the Noachide precepts were welcomed as neighbors but were discouraged from the study of Torah or observing the Sabbath in order, as Meiri explains it, to preserve a cultural gap between them and Jews.<sup>17</sup> If they were interested in Jewish life, they were instructed to accept it in its totality or to refrain from identifying themselves, in action, with such central precepts. Accordingly, where rabbinic decision permitted the inclusion of non-Jews in the territorial domains of the Holy Land, they urged the preservation of behavioral differences that would assure the separation of incompatibility.

Two important observations of a general sort may now be added. First, it is obvious from this discussion that the preservation of community in a pluralistic society requires an emphasis on differences. This does

15. *Sifra* on Leviticus, XX, 26.

16. Maimonides, *Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim*, X, 3.

17. Meiri on *Sanhedrin*, (Frankfort-on-Main: Chermion), p. 229

not imply that differences are more important than common features. Obviously, non-Jews who were welcomed into the Jewish community because they adhered to the Noachide precepts shared with Jews commitments that were, to say the least, far more weighty than those which divided them. Nevertheless, emphasis was placed on the principles that separated rather than on those that united. The gap between different value systems had to be preserved. A clear and well-defined boundary is essential to remove vagueness and confusion. One must be able to recognize—in order to avoid imitating—another who is not a member of his own community of commitment. The Noachide and the Jew do, indeed, worship the same God; but we should not, therefore, speak in hyphenated terms, of the Judeo-Noachide religious tradition which suggests a blurring of boundaries and the consignment of all differences to the realm of trivia and irrelevance.

Secondly, it is community that should be the main source of influence within Jewish life. It is, in fact, the chief instrument for the transmission of values from generation to generation. It is worth stressing this point. Some assign the responsibility of influencing Jewish behavior to *personality* rather than to *community*. Indeed, the power of personality cannot be denied. There are those who are able to inspire and to transform. The prophets belonged to this category; so did many of the leaders of the Hassidic movement; so do many spiritual giants today. There are individuals who possess the kind of charisma that spells—not popularity—but impact. Martin Buber stressed the importance of this type of influence.<sup>18</sup> The I-Thou relation is a model of the kind of engagement in which one person makes an impact on another. But it is too hazardous to leave the task of moulding Jewish character to the fortuitous circumstance that there may appear on the stage of every era enough individuals with sufficient power of personality to accomplish the tasks of communication and survival. The emphasis must, therefore, be placed on community, i.e. cultural environment, rather than on personality.

### III

The Jewish community, during the largest portions of its history has, in fact, opted for separation in the form of community. The ideal of the promised land and the phenomenon of the ghetto—which in many instances was voluntarily established by Jews who sought to preserve the values of Jewish life—expressed the Jewish desire to live in community.

It is only in modern times, as a result of the promise of the enlightenment, that Jewish thought wandered from its traditional path and urged accommodation, acculturation and assimilation. But this view was never

18. Buber, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

held unanimously and, in any case, was subsequently eclipsed by Zionist ideologies in which the need for separation was again affirmed.

It was the rationalism and intellectualism of the enlightenment that supplied the foundation for the doctrines of accommodation. Rationalism meant, among other things, that the human mind is adequate to the task of discovering the truth about the universe. It has the power to identify those human values that reason sanctions and which, therefore, impose universal obligations. The authors of the American Declaration of Independence, for example, inspired as they were by the philosophy of reason, declared it to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they have inalienable rights, etc. Values that lacked the sanction of reason were regarded as parochial rather than universal, as divisive rather than uniting, and were relegated to a position of lesser importance, if not discarded. Intellectualism, as has already been noted, is the view that man is primarily reasonable in nature and that, given the opportunity, he will employ logic, rather than impulse, as a guide to action. This philosophy was the basis for the kind of universalism that rejected boundaries, repudiated walls of separation and recognized the legitimacy of no community that excluded any members of the human family.

This vision is still inspiring, though its rational basis has long ago been rejected. It is well known that human reason is not adequate to the task of discovering universal human values, and that man is not primarily an intellectual entity. Neither the doctrines of rationalism nor intellectualism are respectable among philosophers today. There remains, it is true, the non-rational but religiously inspired messianic dream of a society in which human beings will universally exemplify humane values with none to disagree. This vision, deprived of its rational basis, is still a vital element in human hopes. For the present, however, there are varieties of communities committed to incompatible value schemes which are mutually exclusive and for which separation is a condition of survival. There is no point in assuming the existence of utopian conditions which have not been attained. The pressing need is to preserve harmony in intercommunity relations rather than to eliminate division by the dilution and ultimate disappearance of a value system, that is, by way of assimilation.

#### IV

The task of preserving community in an open society is more difficult than it is in a merely pluralistic society. A pluralistic society is one in which several cultural groups inhabit approximately the same territory and in which each is constantly exposed to influences that tend to negate the values to which it is committed. An open society, on the other hand, is, indeed, pluralistic, but it is more. Karl Popper defined the open society as one "in which individuals are confronted with personal de-

cisions." The difference between the open and closed societies is "the possibility of rational reflection." In the open society, "we make rational decisions, that is to say, decisions based on an estimate of their consequences, and upon a conscious preference of certain consequences to others. We recognize rational personal responsibility."<sup>19</sup> According to this definition, what the open society adds to the pluralistic society is an emphasis upon a) rational reflection and b) the right of personal decision.

The first thing that should be noted is that the rational character of the open society is not at all detrimental to community. On the contrary, it is entirely consistent with it. The preservation of community demands, in the first place, adherence to law. The purpose for which a community is organized requires the exemplification of specific patterns of behavior among its members, and these patterns are expressed in the community's laws. Without law, there is anarchy and communal goals are unattainable. Laws are demanded by reason as well.<sup>20</sup> The rational process involves the application of rules and generalizations to individual instances. The individual Socrates is mortal because the law declares that all men are mortal and Socrates is a man. The individual Cain is guilty because the law asserts that all murderers are guilty and Cain is a murderer. Logical principles are, themselves, rules of inference applicable to a variety of cases. To affirm reason is, therefore, in the first place, to insist on the need for law. It is, in fact, to endorse the validity of that idea which is central to the halakhic perspective, the idea of law. Community depends, in the second place, on the exercise of self-restraint. If law is essential to community, its application demands the consistent denial of sentiment or of feeling whenever they are incompatible with the obligations imposed by law. Reason also demands self-control. To affirm reason is to avoid responding impulsively because of the impression of the moment. It is to hesitate and not to act unless the impending action is consistent with the value scheme that one has adopted. The use of reason in society, therefore, strengthens community.

We may conclude that it is the irrational—not the rational—character of American society today that has been damaging to Jewish community life. We are aware of a general reaction against reason in many segments of contemporary American life. The appeal that religious cults make to our young people is not rational in nature. Some take drugs to "expand the mind," but this expansion is not to be identified with increased

19. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, (London: George Rutledge and Sons, Ltd., 1945) I, p. 152.

20. This is not to say that every law is rational. Many are not. For example, laws frequently express a community's irrational prejudices. What is meant is that reason depends on laws for its use and application; that is, if there were no laws, i.e., rules and generalizations, reason could not be employed. Hence, there is no inconsistency between this pre-requisite of reason and the corresponding requirement of community.

clarity of thought but, rather, with an intensified emotional experience. The new morality, with its emphasis on moral impulse rather than moral rule, is intrinsically anti-rational. By insisting on the uniqueness of each moral situation, the new morality, in effect, declares that moral rules are irrelevant. It follows that reason is useless as a guide to moral behavior. There are many reasons for the current mood of anti-rationalism—not least significant among them is the claim that reason, in the form of science, has brought mankind to the brink of total annihilation. In any case, the American cultural climate is today afflicted with a profound disillusion with reason, a disease that has attacked and successfully invaded the very fortress of reason, the university campus.

This reaction against reason has gone too far. Its rejection invariably complicates and renders vastly more difficult the Jewish community's task of self-preservation. When a doctrine had, at least, to satisfy the canons of rationality in order to appeal to the young American Jew, when reason was held in higher esteem, the Jewish community was not faced with the problem of conversion out of the Jewish faith. In a rationalistic climate, a purely mystical or emotional approach could not have such impact or make significant inroads. Its appeal today derives, among other things, from the repudiation of reason as a necessary ingredient in the decision making process. One of the values that Judaism has, therefore, affirmed—and it would do well to emphasize—in this era of anti-rationalism, is the value of reason.

It is the second component in the concept of the open society, that is, the right of personal decision, that is a threat to community. For, if this right, which is, in fact, conferred in a democratic society, is interpreted to mean that each individual is the ultimate standard of right and wrong; that each person may legislate for himself, according to his own perceptions, that which is good and bad; that the frequently unreasonable and arbitrary will of each individual shall be his sole authority and its decisions shall be controlling in his personal affairs, then, indeed, Jewish life is impossible. The emphasis upon individual rights, when given this extreme interpretation, is, indeed, incompatible with the idea of community. For the very existence of community depends on the self-restraint which is the concomitant of obligation and which, in fact, limits the right of personal decision.

Consider again the open society as Popper describes it. It possesses two major ingredients—one is rational reflection, the other is personal decision. While the latter is essential for self-expression, the former is needed for self-restraint. While the guaranteed right of personal decision fosters the expression of individuality, conformity to the requirements of reason is at the basis of the existence of community. Reason restrains. Reason declares, merely as a matter of logic, that if a specific goal is an individual or a national commitment, the individual or the nation must

assume certain responsibilities as obligations. If an open society is to survive and if its survival is an ultimate goal, then, obviously, individual citizens must subordinate their personal interests when called to their country's defense, in the payment of taxes, and in avoiding interference with others in the exercise of their rights. Hence, the very existence of an open society presupposes a certain tension between two apparently incompatible principles—the principle of personal decision, which is based on rights and assures individuality, and the principle of reason, which generates obligations and guarantees community. Hence, when reason, which is the source of obligation in an open society, is discarded, the very existence of community is threatened. This is, in fact, a current phenomenon. We feel a threat to our existence, not only as Jews, but as Americans. The danger derives from the breakdown of community, in its American sense, that was brought about, in large measure, by the contemporary rejection of reason.

But while reason is the source of obligation in a democratic context, *mizvot* is its source in Jewish life. The Jewish community is endangered when Jews, conscious of their American heritage, insist on the right of personal decision in the context of the religious experience. The Jewish community's task is to strengthen community through the introduction, in an ever wider sphere, of the obligations that are expressed in *mizvot*. Reason and *mizvot* have this in common: they both impose obligations. The obligations assigned by reason are derived from the logical consequences of some kind of commitment, even a commitment to the right of personal decision. The obligations imposed by *mizvot* are expressions of the divine will. And there is no incompatibility between the obligations imposed by reason and inferred from the commitment to the values of an open society and the additional obligations that a religious personality assumes because he wants to be responsive to the will of God. It is logically possible to preserve Jewish community in the open society.

## V

This, then, is our conclusion. Separation is an essential character of human existence. It is also a necessary condition of Jewish survival. The enterprise of Jewish self-preservation is enhanced when the Jewish community supports patterns of behavior that express the values of Torah. When this is realized, Jewish survival may be achieved, even in the context of an open society.

# *Shavuot, "Matan Torah," and the Triennial Cycle*

BRUCE H. CHARNOV

The festival of Shavuot is unique among those presented in the Bible in that no exact date is given for its celebration. Deut. 16:9 describes it in this manner:

Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee; from the time the sickle is first put to the standing corn shalt thou begin to number seven weeks. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks.

As observed by Julius H. Greenstone, "This simply provides for the observance of the festival at the conclusion of seven weeks of harvest which corresponds approximately to the period between the beginning of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest."<sup>1</sup> A slightly more definitive description, although not without other difficulties of its own, is given in Leviticus 23:15-16:

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the day of rest [*Shabbat*], from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the waving; seven weeks shall there be complete; even unto the morrow after the seventh week shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall present a new meal offering unto the Lord.

Here, also, a definite date for the celebration is lacking, and during the later rabbinic period this lack of a definite date resulted in many different traditions:

1) Pharisees — Interpreting the word *Shabbat* as referring to the first day of Passover,<sup>2</sup> the Pharisees began counting the seven weeks from the 16th of Nisan, with Shavuot being celebrated on the 6th of Sivan.<sup>3</sup>

2) Sadducees — Interpreting the word *Shabbat* literally (not merely as a day of rest, such as the first day of Passover, but the actual Sabbath), the Sadducees maintained that this was specifically a reference to the first Sabbath after the beginning of Passover, and, thus, began counting from the "morrow after the day of rest," namely, on a Sunday, with Shavuot falling on the eighth Sunday after Passover.<sup>4</sup> (It will immediately be recognized that the Christian holiday of Pentecost also follows such a pattern.)

---

1. Julius H. Greenstone, *Jewish Feasts and Fasts*, (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1946), p. 228.

2. Only one day is celebrated in Israel.

3. Hayyim Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals*, Trans. by Samuel Jaffe, (Cincinnati: UAHC, p. 88). See also note 96, p. 296. *Sifra*, "Emor," Perek 12; see also T. B. *Menaḥot*, 65a-66a.

4. Not unexpectedly, the Karaites also maintained such a literal interpretation.

---

BRUCE H. CHARNOV, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary, is currently a Chaplain in the U.S. Navy.



3) Book of Jubilees (Chs. 6, 15)<sup>5</sup> — There is evidence to indicate that the Book of Jubilees offers yet another tradition, for the phrase “morrow after the day of rest” is taken to mean the entire holiday of Passover, so that the counting began *after* the whole of the holiday was over, with Shavuot being celebrated on the 15th of Sivan (The Book of Jubilees assumes that the months of Nisan and Sivan both have 28 days),<sup>6</sup> which is also the tradition of the Qumran Community.<sup>7</sup>

4) Falashas — The Falashas counted in a manner similar to the Book of Jubilees, but arrived at a different date due to their tradition of a different number of days in Nisan and Iyar, thus celebrating Shavuot on the 12th of Sivan.<sup>8</sup>

The Bible refers to the holiday of Shavuot by three different names, each decidedly agricultural in nature, reflecting, undoubtedly, its earliest orientation. These are:

1) *Hag Shavuot* (Feast of Weeks), Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10.

2) *Yom ha-Bikkurim* (Day of the First Fruits), Num. 28:26.

3) *Hag ha-Kazir* (Festival of the Harvest), Ex. 23:16.

The Greek-speaking Jews called Shavuot by the term Pentecost and the rabbinic term was *Azeret* (R. H. 1:2; *Hag* 2, 4). None of these terms or descriptions, however, relates in any way to the association of Shavuot with *Matan Torah*, the giving of the Law (Torah) at Mt. Sinai. This association, thus, appears to be a later development. Dr. Louis Jacobs has pointed out that “neither Josephus nor Philo refers to Shavuot as ‘the time of the giving of our Torah,’ ”<sup>9</sup> and that none of the references in the rabbinic literature to the Torah being given on that day (e.g., *Shab.* 86b) is earlier than the second century C.E., although there may well have been a tradition far earlier than this in a non-literary form. The earliest clear reference to Shavuot as the anniversary of the giving of the Torah is from the third century C. E., e.g.—the saying of R. Eleazar that “all authorities agree that it is necessary to rejoice with good food and wine on *Azeret* (Shavuot) because it was the day on which the Torah was given (*Pes.* 68b).

The rabbis linked these two events, the giving of the Torah and the holiday of Shavuot, by means of “homiletical methods of interpretation,”<sup>10</sup> making use of the passage in Ex. 19:1, which states that the Jews

5. Schauss states, concerning the Book of Jubilees, that it is “a Midrashic amplification on Genesis that was written in Hebrew in Palestine during the latter time of the second Temple.” He further points out that the Hebrew version was lost, and that Jubilees has come down to us in Ethiopian translation, discovered in Abyssinia in the middle of the 19th century, and apparently copied from a Greek version.

6. Schauss, *Op. cit.*, pp. 296–7, note 96.

7. Louis Jacobs, “*Shavuot*,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 14, p. 1319.

8. Schauss, *Op. cit.*; Jacobs, *Op. cit.*

9. Jacobs, *Op. cit.*, p. 1319.

10. Greenstone, *Op. cit.*, p. 229. See also, Gaster, *Festivals of the Jewish Year*, pp. 61–2.

reached Mt. Sinai after a journey of three months. The rabbis asserted that this actually meant in the *midst* of the third month for the arrival at Mt. Sinai, the giving of the Torah then taking place *during* the third month, which is Sivan, the same month during which the holiday of Shavuot is celebrated by the Pharisaic, Sadducean, Book of Jubilees, and Falasha traditions. It was a simple matter, therefore, to link these two events which then occurred during Sivan. It is easy to assume that the rabbis, in giving a historical significance to Shavuot (*Matan Torah*), were merely employing their homiletical talents to link two events which did seem to have a certain degree of proximity; or that they were merely making *de jure* what had existed as a *de facto* reality.<sup>11</sup> But both of these interpretations ignore the *organic* connection provided by the traditions embodied within the Triennial Cycle (T.C.) of Torah readings which was practiced in ancient Palestine.

The Triennial Cycle refers to the ancient tradition in which the weekly Torah readings were broken into 154 separate portions which were then read, in order, over a three year period.<sup>12</sup> Although this cycle was practiced in ancient Palestine, the more familiar one-year cycle used in ancient Babylon became the subsequently accepted tradition, perhaps reflecting the ascendancy of the Babylonian centers of Jewish scholarship (*Meg.* 29b; Maimonides, *Yad*, *Tefillah* 13:1). However, the recognition that in ancient Palestine the Torah was read in a Triennial Cycle sheds an interesting light on many other Jewish traditions as well as on Shavuot:

1) The creation story was read in the month of Nisan (in the first year of the cycle), undoubtedly the source of R. Joshua's view that the world was created in Nisan (*R.H.* 11a).

2) The sin of Cain (*Gen.* 4) is read, in the first year of the Triennial Cycle, during Passover, which explains the midrash in *Pirkei de R. Eliezer*, ch. 21, that Cain offered his sacrifice during Passover.

3) The death of Moses, found in *Deut.* 34, is read (during the 3rd year of the Triennial Cycle) in the first week of Adar, thereby explaining the rabbinic tradition that Moses died on the 7th of Adar.

4) Ex. 12, the story of the Exodus from bondage in Egypt, was read in Nisan (2nd year of the Triennial Cycle), which coincided with the celebration of Passover.

5) The tradition that Rachel was remembered on Rosh Hashanah (New Year), as mentioned in *R.H.* 10b, is due to the reading of the

11. Greenstone, *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

12. There are also traditions of 161 and 175 portions with reading times as long as 3½ years (twice each 7 years) — See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 15, p. 1386. See Benjamin of Tudela, who maintains that as late as 1170 C.E. Egyptian congregations read according to the Triennial Cycle. "Itinerary," ed. Asher, p. 90, mentioned in *J.E.* (KTAV), vol. 12, p. 254.

appropriate portion (Gen. 30:22, "And God remembered Rachel"), which was read on Rosh Hashanah, in the 1st year of the Triennial Cycle. Finally, the portion read in the 2nd year of the Triennial Cycle on the 6th of Sivan, corresponding to the Pharisaic interpretation and determination of Shavuot, included Ex. 20:1-4, the giving of the Ten Commandments.

Thus, there existed a direct link between Shavuot and the giving of the Torah, *Matan Torah*, in the 2nd year of the Triennial Cycle. The association between these two events was a natural one, not dependent upon either coincidence or rabbinic homily; although it is certainly a possibility that the rabbinic interpretation which sought to link these two traditions was produced in those areas (Babylon) where the Triennial Cycle was neither accepted nor practiced, for such a direct literary link between Shavuot and *Matan Torah* would not have existed in a one-year Torah-reading cycle.

Eminent scholars, such as Rabbi Dr. Louis Jacobs,<sup>13</sup> have asserted that the Triennial Cycle was created to assure that the appropriate Torah portion was read on each festival or on the correct Sabbath during the year. However, this assertion ignores the fact that:

1) the themes for the major festivals (i.e. Sukkot, Passover, and the agricultural aspects of Shavuot) were clearly defined before the institution of the Triennial Cycle;

2) the correct portion would be read only *once* during the three years;

3) if the institution of the Triennial Cycle had, as its major *raison d'être*, the matching of the weekly portion with the appropriate holiday, and securing what must have seemed an obvious intellectual-literary benefit, the question then remains why was the yearly cycle accepted?

4) even with the institution of the Triennial Cycle, such a desired correspondence between holiday and Torah portion was not always possible. Thus, the Mishnah in *Meg.* 3:5 ordains special readings from the Torah for festivals (although it must be noted that it is possible that *Meg.* 3:5 was the product of Babylonian rabbinic thinking where the Triennial Cycle was not practiced and such special readings would have been necessary).

In the light of the above observations, it seems far more likely that the Triennial Cycle was instituted for reasons similar to those of certain modern Conservative and Reform congregations, namely, that the congregants cannot follow, and devote the necessary attention to, the long weekly portion prescribed by the yearly cycle of Torah readings. Once instituted, the Triennial Cycle gave rise to many traditions based on the connection of a Biblical event with that certain Sabbath

13. Jacobs, *Op. cit.*; also see "Triennial Cycle," *EJ*, Vol. 15, p. 1387.

upon which it was read once during the three years. One such tradition was that of Shavuot and *Matan Torah*. We may then conclude that the institution of the Triennial Cycle would have to be dated after Philo and Josephus, who do not seem to know of the connection between Shavuot and *Matan Torah* (or, at least, the connection of Shavuot and *Matan Torah* would then have to be dated after Philo and Josephus).

The institution of the Triennial Cycle is reflected significantly in the New Testament, with the Christian counterpart to Shavuot, the holiday of Pentecost, which is celebrated 50 days after Easter, but always on a Sunday, which conforms to the Sadducean interpretation and determination of the date of Shavuot. The New Testament, in Acts 11, associates the holiday of Pentecost with the descending of the Holy Spirit and the confusion of tongues. This connection is readily understood in the light of the Triennial Cycle, for the portion read at that time (Pentecost-Shavuot) in the *first* year of the Triennial Cycle would have been Gen. 11, the story of the Tower of Babel with its concomitant literary motif of the descending of God and the subsequent confusion of tongues! It is obvious that the Book of Acts is associating a holiday with a literary tradition which was pre-existent and literarily concurrent according to the Triennial Cycle, much in the same manner that Jewish tradition came to associate the holiday with a literary tradition derived from the second year's portion of the Triennial Cycle, namely the association of Shavuot and *Matan Torah*, and the fact that the event of the giving of the Law was certainly central to Jewish tradition.

The Triennial Cycle, then, offers an organic connection between *Matan Torah* and Shavuot, the rabbinic interpretation seeming to be appropriate to those areas such as Babylon, where the Triennial Cycle was not observed. First advanced by A. Buechler over 80 years ago,<sup>14</sup> and later amplified by scholars such as Mann<sup>15</sup> and H. Albeck,<sup>16</sup> this organic connection needs much more exploration and can shed much light on the historicity of that process by which the nature festivals were given historical significance and robbed of their nature mythology.<sup>17</sup> Certainly no exploration or explanation of Shavuot and *Matan Torah* is complete without it.

14. *JQR* 5, 1892/93, pp. 420-68. *JQR* 6, 1893/94, pp. 1-73.

16. *Ginzberg Jubilee Volume*, 1946, pp. 25-43 (Hebrew).

15. *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*.

17. See, for example, J. Heinemann's article in *TARBIZ* 33 (1963/64), pp. 362-68, or Jakob Petuchowski's *Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy*, 1970, xvii-xxiii.

# *The Musar Movement and Psychotherapy*

ARNOLD RACHLIS

Reb Israel used to say:

Both the Hasid as well as the Mitnaged are deserving of punishment. The Hasid because he asks "Why do I need the Book when I have the Rebbe?" The Mitnaged who asks, "Why do I need the Rabbi when I have the Book."<sup>1</sup>

## *I. Introduction*

IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, THREE GREAT movements or trends fought for the soul of East European Jewry: Haskalah (Enlightenment), Mitnagdim (Talmudic rationalists) and Hasidism. The first offered intellectual and political liberation, the second gave its followers knowledge and stability in their prized tradition, and the third democratized Jewish spirituality by acknowledging each person's direct access to God. A fourth movement, less well known than the others, grew out of the tension and vacuum created by these other segments in Jewish life. The Musar movement, developed by Rabbi Israel Salanter, stressed ethics and self-scrutiny—not because these elements were entirely lacking within the other movements, but because they were too often overshadowed by the stress on modernity, scholarship or communion.

Aside from its intrinsic importance in molding the spiritual life of Russian Jewry, Musar is highly interesting because of its striking resemblance to many aspects of modern psychotherapy. Musar was not established as a psychotherapeutic system; rather, it was a way of emphasizing the ethical within each person. However, in its search for the best way of teaching ethics and understanding ethical behavior, it evolved a sophisticated system for individual therapy, group encounter and the eradication of self-destructive thought and action.

While it is certainly true that all religions have developed insights into human behavior and needs, the organizing of those insights has been done by modern psychology. The return to a *traditional* religious system is not the only way to re-integrate those insights into daily living. By studying Musar, we can see if those assumptions and techniques deemed beneficial by *modern* psychology can be returned to

---

1. Menachem Glenn, *Israel Salanter* (New York: Bloch Pub. Co., 1943), p. 99.

---

ARNOLD RACHLIS is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of religion at Temple University, and will be graduated from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1975.

modern religion. At the same time, religions which have viewed people in different social, historical, and economic situations can offer to psychology insights into human experience. This is the purpose of a meeting between Musar and modern psychotherapy.

## II. Israel Salanter

Israel Salanter, the developer of Musar, was born in 1810 in Zhagory, Lithuania. His earliest studies stressed the importance of *pilpul*, but gradually he rejected that method of Talmudic argument and devoted his life to *gemilut ḥasadim*. He wrote little, and information concerning his life and deeds comes from a few followers and later admirers.

By stressing the importance of ethics and introspection, Salanter hoped to bridge the gaps between the Maskilim, the Mitnagdim and the Hasidim. These qualities were too often overshadowed by an emphasis on knowing the secular world, scholarship, or ecstasy and mysticism respectively. Salanter was eclectic. He gathered all types of Jewish literature, adopted any books or adapted any teachings which could help his followers understand their actions, begin self-scrutiny and weaken the power of the self in controlling their lives. The Biblical wisdom books, Bahya Ibn Pakudah's *Duties of the Heart*, ethical wills, Maskil literature, *Mesillat Yesharim* by Luzzatto, and Salanter's own *Iggeret ha-Musar* were only some of the many texts he collected.

Salanter was grieved that people placed so much emphasis on ritual law, while overlooking Jewish ethics. The great Talmudic yeshivot did not emphasize the study of ethics and neither did the rabbis in local communities who graduated from these yeshivot. Salanter said that even as a rabbi must examine the knives of the slaughtering house for defects, so must he go to the stores of the town to examine the weights and measures. Love of man was as important for Salanter as love of God, so that "when a situation arose where the will of God as explained by the codifiers came in direct conflict with the good of the people; he held that the welfare of the people deserved priority."<sup>2</sup>

Salanter believed that human nature was perfectable if one would undergo a system of self-discipline, self-evaluation, and self-understanding. "The Musar Movement" according to Ury, "tried to combine the cognitive and the pragmatic."<sup>3</sup> The problem with most ethicists, though, is that they limit their philosophies to abstract principles and, therefore, have little effect on man's daily living. Who can help a man decide in a specific instance whether it is more moral to give charity or to buy something for his family? The answer must be derived not just

2. Ibid., p. 27.

3. Zalman Ury, *The Musar Movement* (New York: Yeshiva U., Press, 1970), p. 7.

from general principles, but from an environment that concerns itself with such questions also. In addition, this environment should have role models or moral advisors to help one make his own decision.

Salanter developed an original theory in Jewish religious thought. Man's inner self consisted of two parts—the vivid conscious part and the dull non-conscious one. He said that, "The latter, harboring primary instincts and acquired characteristics, is much stronger than the former, which possesses reason, common sense, and purity of the spirit."<sup>4</sup> He related these parts of the self to the traditional ideals of *Yezer Tov* and *Yezer Ra* respectively.

Unfortunately, knowing the right and doing it are two different matters. According to Salanter, the strong subconscious drives inhibit man's moral behaviour, but with a knowledge of Musar techniques, man would be capable of acting morally. Musar is a process in which one has continually to submit himself to self-analysis and self-criticism. A state of equilibrium can never be reached, but it can be approached step by step.

The Musar books existed well before Salanter. But these moral books had failed to instill in Jews ethical decision-making abilities. Salanter knew that the cognitive and the emotive had to be linked. "Musar must be studied with ecstasy, which shall stir the soul to seek self-improvement."<sup>5</sup> Thus, by vividly imagining the consequences of immoral behaviour, the learner will be stirred towards understanding. Finally, constant, emotionally charged Musar study will lead to the internalization of correct behaviour patterns and, soon, ideas will become an active part of the self.

After ecstasy, the next step is self-discipline. The first stage is the subjugation of bad instincts the (*Yezer Ra*) and the second is the correction of those instincts. According to Salanter, struggle is brought by the first while the second ends in happiness.

Realizing that self-evaluation is difficult, Salanter organized group sessions, which were attended by students on a regular basis. The individual who was being discussed was there to defend or clarify his actions. Salanter urged his students to "exercise patience and disregard pride when their behaviour was discussed by the group . . . to take sufficient time for deliberation; not to mock anyone; and to consider the whole individual, his failures as well as his achievements."<sup>6</sup>

A Musar Yeshivah would also include a *Mashgiach* who acted as a moral guide for the students. He would conduct Musar lectures, provide individualized therapy, run informal group sessions (not the previously mentioned student-run *va'ad*) and help bridge the gap be-

4. Israel Salanter, "*Iggeret Ha-Musar*" in *Or Yisrael*, p. 49.

5. Ury, *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 36.



tween what traditional texts taught and what each Musarite must realize for himself. "In guiding the individual student, the *Mashgiach* refrains from infringing upon his privacy and dignity, leading him instead towards self-understanding and spiritual self-sufficiency.<sup>7</sup> The *Mashgiach* would conduct both individual and group therapy. Unlike the student-run *va'ad*, the *Mashgiach's* group sessions did not meet regularly, but were gatherings of like-minded students in an informal setting.

Salanter's system also included more than Salanter could give: "Practical wisdom," he said, "is not to be found in Musar books . . . each man is left to his own devices in acquiring such wisdom."<sup>8</sup> Practical wisdom, for Salanter, meant understanding the realities of interpersonal and intrapersonal life—how to detect one's own inner motives as well as those of others. Again and again, he warned that one must "control the causes of a particular behaviour, not just the symptoms."<sup>9</sup>

Constantly, the Orthodox establishment criticized Salanter. They disapproved of the introspection and asceticism of Musar that sometimes became a negation of life, a mystical ascetism. Salanter engaged in long silent walks, as well as in seances at *Minhah*, with a small group of disciples. According to Glenn,

these seances affected (the Musarites) with religious psychoses, wherein the real and the imaginary were confused. Rabbi Israel, whose body was not so strong because of poverty and self-inflicted privations, could not stand the strain. He suffered a nervous disorder of a serious nature. He was subject to melancholy fits, the result of his pessimistic teachings and ideas.<sup>10</sup>

Salanter's poor mental condition was a hereditary melancholia. The doctors had urged him to stop worrying, but Salanter would not listen. How could one overlook the imperfections in the world? His worrying increased during Elul and the Ten Days of Penitence when he remained completely silent for forty days and nights.

The story of Salanter's death is a continuation of the story of his life. At the age of seventy-three, Salanter came to Koenigsberg and was left in the care of an old man. Salanter knew that death was approaching within a few hours, but rather than be concerned with his own *vidui* (confession) he urged the man not to be perturbed by the sight of a corpse. He explained how it was harmless, and that the man should not be afraid. These were Salanter's last thoughts—tenderness towards another human being.

Many of the Musarites after Salanter began to resemble the Hasidim by setting up personality cults and proclaiming the superiority of their

7. Ibid., p. 39.

8. Isaac Blazer, ed., *Or Yisrael* (Tel Aviv: Israel-American Offset, 1959), p. 43.

9. Ury, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

10. M. Glenn, *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

faith in God over knowledge of Talmud. Many walked around all day long, like the mystics of Safed, dressed in *tallit* and *tefillin*. Others resorted to a kind of revivalist meeting style where young Musarites would enter a town and shout: "*Gaaveh! Gaaveh!* (Pride! Pride!) A man must not be proud!"

Many new Musar mottoes were created, such as: "One page of a Musar book is worth more than thousands of pages of Talmud folios."<sup>11</sup> The Musarites taught that to show too much honor and respect to others was a breach of morals; that one can arrive at the gates of holiness only when one learns not to have regard for people. In fact, one must not have regard even for one's self.<sup>12</sup>

Was this a reversal of Salanter's teachings or an extension of them? If Musar is to be viewed "as the biographies of those individuals who struggled to radically change themselves and to share that insight with others,"<sup>13</sup> then this, too, is Musar.

Little is known about many Musar personalities since they guarded their privacy. They were suspicious of pat answers, resisted egotism, and some were even reluctant to insist that others follow their path of self-scrutiny and self-discovery.

### III. *Comparison With Hasidism*

Neither the Musar of Salanter nor that of his disciples was ever received with the same popularity as was Hasidism. Hasidism had begun over a century earlier and, as a reaction to the spiritual and physical crisis of European Jewry, it had served its people well. Salanter opposed their simple piety, and he urged his own pupils never to be cult followers like the Hasidim, who saw their rebbes in a mystical way. Instead, he urged them to gain their own spiritual independence.

To be a Musarite was, in many ways, the emotional opposite of the life style of the Hasidim. The Hasidim emphasized joy—while the Musarites were often sombre. The Hasidim gathered to sing and dance—while the Musarites met to criticize themselves and seek criticism of their fellows. The Hasidim spoke of the holiness of all things—while the Musarites struggled to root out the threads of pride and deception that they sensed in the fabric of human existence. The Hasidim focused their devotion on their charismatic leader, the Rebbe—while the Musarites fled from personality cults and set their eyes upon the existential loneliness of each human being, that condition of total singularity that makes each person unique. And while the Hasidim sought to achieve a state of euphoria in religious ecstasy, the Musarites tried to discover the redemptive elements in the most painful of human experiences: shame and separation and death itself.<sup>14</sup>

This break with the techniques of Hasidism cost Salanter many of his

11. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

13. Joel Harris, *Encounters in the Month of Elul* (London: WUJS, 1971), p. 12.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

followers. People wanted rebbes to serve, rather than psychological counselors who forced them to find their own self-realization. When Hasidism arose in the eighteenth century, there had been a general spiritual crisis because of the false Messiahs Shabbtai Zvi and Jacob Frank. People were ready for the joy and ease of Hasidism.

There are seven conditions that are needed for the development of a mass movement:

(1) leadership (2) followership (3) major ideas and ideals which fire the imagination of people (4) social, economic, and spiritual bonds between the leaders and followers (5) historical events which set the stage for change (6) the emergence of a powerful leader at the right time and right place (7) that this leader be both an efficient administrator and a man of vision capable of inspiring people to transcend the vicissitudes of the present and strive ceaselessly towards an ultimate goal.<sup>15</sup>

Hasidism exhibited these conditions. The Musar movement did not. Musar taught how man ought to be. It avoided the personality cult of Hasidism and was an individualistic movement. The Baal Shem Tov finally settled down among his people. Rabbi Israel Salanter always moved to preach. Hasidism soothed; Musar disturbed.

#### IV. *Musar and Psychotherapy*

Psychotherapy has been described as: a form of treatment of persons (patients) with disturbed thoughts, feelings, and/or actions by other persons (therapists) largely through the process of verbal interchange, with the specific goal of which they are mutually aware—reducing these disturbances and encouraging more desirable behavior. Here then, in concise form, are the common components of the psychotherapeutic process: (1) one or more persons (patients) with some awareness of neglected or mis-handled life problems; (2) one or more persons (therapists) with relative lack of disturbance who perceive the distress of the patients and believe themselves capable of helping the patients to reduce distress; (3) a positive regard of patients for therapists and vice versa; (4) understanding and empathy of therapist for patient; (5) perception by patient of the positive regard for and empathic understanding of him by the therapist; (6) provision by the therapist of more correct information for the patient regarding the realities of his environment; (7) help that the patient may achieve a better self-evaluation; (8) emotional catharsis; (9) a gradually increasing number of tasks for the patient to perform between therapy sessions in applying new information about himself and his environment; and (10) a gradual process whereby the patient learns to become independent of the therapist.<sup>16</sup>

Musar techniques can be understood in the light of these components. First of all, the physical structure of the Musar sessions as well as the appointment of *Mashgichim* who have been through much therapy themselves creates awareness and empathy among the participants. There is positive regard on both sides, since all live together in a community of

15. Ury, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

16. Robert Harper, *Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy: 36 Systems* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1959), p. 9.

fellowship—often eating, praying, and studying together. The *Mashgiach* has been trained, through his own devotion to Musar and self-scrutiny, to respect his students' struggle.

Although the techniques of the *Mashgiach* may not have been as subtle as those of many present day psychotherapists, they conveyed concern and direction to the student. To combat the feeling that the student had unique problems, the *Mashgiach* revealed situations from his own life that led him to confusion and helped him to transcend confusion. Catharsis, which is central to therapy, occurred again and again in Musar *va'adot*. *Mashgichim* urged fellow students to react with comfort and understanding. "Homework" tasks were given by *Mashgichim* to help the student solve his problems between sessions. Although personal self-scrutiny was seen as a life-long task, bringing this process into peoples' lives was of great importance also. *Baalei Musar* were urged to go out into the community to become *Mashgichim* or to preach Musar.

The techniques and philosophies of psychotherapy that Salanter developed were seen as part of Judaism. Many relate to contemporary methods:

1. Although Salanter recognized the power of subconscious drives, he strongly held to the idea of man's free will. Man is not completely determined by his external or internal states.
2. What psychiatrists call "waiting power," that is, being continuously occupied with life's ongoing experiences, was stressed in Musar training.
3. Most importantly, Musar is "preventative and developmental, rather than remedial."<sup>17</sup> Instituted in a yeshivah curriculum, it not only served to develop a moral conscience, but to reduce and analyze small tensions before they grew into larger ones.
4. An aggressive drive was seen by Musar as the downfall of man. There may be some relationship here to Adler's view of the search for power as the central determinant of human actions. Frustrated into inferiority, people will compensate with power to overcome their sense of weakness. Both Adler and Musar saw the therapeutic relationship as the beginning of a new way of seeing relationships for the patient. Both Musar and Adler saw the search for power as destructive to human development.
5. Musar therapy was directive—although the *Mashgiach* and students listened to each others' questions, criticisms and suggestions for new approaches were often explicitly stated. Musar, it must be remembered, was, indeed, working within the larger religio-ethical system of Judaism, and, therefore, held certain principles and modes

---

17. Ury, *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

of action to be good and transcendent. Therefore, Musar strove to change its adherents to those very specific directions. In this sense, Musar resembles the psychotherapy of Frederick Thorne, in which the therapist acts as an educator—the opposite of Rogerian client-centered therapy. The *Mashgiach* is assumed to have great insight into his students' needs, yet he refrains from being an authoritarian teacher—rather, he directs the student to his own needs.

6. Some therapies, like that of Sandor Ferenczi, an early follower of psychonalalysis, urge abstinence from bodily pleasures. A minimum of eating, drinking and sex would bring more libido into the emotional experiences related in analysis. Although Ferenczi gave up this technique and moved to the opposite extreme, Musar saw it as a valuable tool.

7. Musar held that the most important relationship was with the self, as opposed to interpersonal relationships, as strongly stressed by Buber or Harry Stack Sullivan.

8. Musar resembles Frankl's logotherapy, in that "man's search for an ultimate purpose in life drives him on to meet challenges and to find meaning in suffering."<sup>18</sup> Man needs spiritual dynamics, not inner equilibrium, in order to grow. The crisis atmosphere of existentialism, the narrow ridge of Buber, the will to discover meaning in life's situations are all inherent in Musar's world view. Much of the moral confusion of the students in a Musar *shtibel* could have been seen as existential neuroses which could be resolved by the therapists' showing the flaws in the students' world view. Existential analysis rejects the categorization of psychoanalysis and sees each human being as an unfolding system. It humbles the therapist and makes him stand on common ground with the patient. The being-togetherness of the therapist and patient is the Musar relationship of the *Mashgiach* and the *Baal Musar*.

9. Musar resembles psychoanalysis only in the number of sessions that a person attended each week. At a Musar yeshivah, a student could be in individual therapy an hour a day, be in group therapy with, or without, an experienced therapist three times a week and, in addition, attend a monthly Musar lecture.

10. The technique of the Musar lecture is found later in J. W. Klapman's didactic approach to group therapy. Lectures are presented on topics like neurotic conflict and resistance to therapy, and patients are assigned readings, hold discussions and debate the topics. They present oral reports and use autobiographical material. Although this is Klapman's only method, it is only a small part of the Musar technique.

18. Ibid., p. 23.

## V. Conclusion

In Musar *yeshivot* today, a portion of each day is set aside for student-student or rebbe-student communication. Centering around an ethical text, each partner contributes insights from his own experiences. In this way, young people are stimulated to think about their own abilities and deficiencies, and to help others to understand theirs. In the same way, Musar *shmuses* in classes, and even within whole schools, add to a general atmosphere of openness.

Unfortunately, many of the most important problems, for instance sexual ethics, are obscured by abstract discussion on both sides. Moreover, some men who teach Musar may be unsuited to be role models and moral counselors. Despite these possible failings, there remains the openness of encounter, the ecstasy of introspection and sharing, and the personal integrity that exists within Musar.

One of the newest developments in Musar is the *The Musar Anthology*. A collection of over twenty articles on the history, tales and modern approaches to Musar, it shows a profound understanding of Musar's ethical and psychological sides. Its creators have already held seminars and they plan to spread Musar to "universities, rabbinical seminaries, macrobiotic study centers and bookstores. . ."<sup>19</sup>

It is impossible to study Musar and be unaffected by it. It is not solely an investigation for the mind, but for the conscience as well. Although asceticism is not a desirable life style, self-criticism leading to self-improvement is psychologically beneficial. The encounter groups, the public confessionals, the introspection with the *Mashgiach*, the temporary depression leading to a new level of morality, are all healthy contributions to life. Hasidism has given the world much—it is a democratization of religiosity that lifts people out of spiritual insecurity. Musar is a suitable complement to Hasidism, for it always challenges people to look within in order ethically to create anew in the world.

19. Hillel Goldberg, *Musar Anthology* (Hyde Park, Mass.: Harwich Lithograph, 1972), p. 4.

# *Avram Uri Kovner:* *A Search for Acceptance*

SAUL M. GINSBURG\*

Tr. by Claire M. Shapiro

THE LIFE OF AVRAM URI KOVNER, WRITER AND critic, is a tragic story of moral dilemmas and psychological contradictions, of ambitious dreams, bold enterprises and disastrous consequences unfolded against a background of the literary scene of 19th Century Russia.

Kovner was born in Vilna, in 1842, the son of a poor melamed. The family was so poor that, in memoirs written many years later, Kovner still suffers from the pain of their misfortunes. He relates how when he was a child his father lost four rubles which he had received as a fee from a pupil.

This was a terrible blow for the whole family. I remember that father cried bitter tears and for several days after the loss he was still searching the streets of Vilna in the hopes of finding the money. Mother went about the house in a state of depression so grievous that the children hid themselves from her gloomy looks, shivering in the corners of the house.

Another recollection, even more illustrative of the family's miserable condition, is also recorded by Kovner:

Once a cat ate a little goose fat which mother had put aside in an earthenware pot for use at another time. This "thievery" angered my father so that he was determined to destroy the culprit. He thrust the cat into a burlap sack and began to beat the poor animal against a wall. The cat, shrieking in terror, struggled to free itself, making such a dreadful noise that my father's wrath exploded and he threw the sack against the wall with even greater fierceness. Finally, exhausted, unable to tolerate the heart-rending shrieks of the cat, he gave up. The cat scampered away as though the devil were after it. It is difficult to say who suffered more, the unhappy cat, or my unhappy father who, normally, was a soft-hearted man.

Though little more is known of Kovner's youth than what he relates in his memoirs, it is recorded that when he was eight years old his father enrolled him in a Rabbinical school where he soon demonstrated a precocious facility in Hebrew and is reputed to have shown a talent for writing in that language as well as in Yiddish, even composing some Hebrew songs. Many years later, in a series of articles which he wrote in Yiddish for the Russian Yiddish journal, *The Day*, Kovner described his youthful experiences, relating how he wandered from yeshivah to yeshivah, from Mir to Stopt, from Kovno to Moroch,

\* This article is a chapter from Saul M. Ginsburg's *Meshumadim in Tzarishen Russland*, 1946.



studying Talmud and boarding with several families. He writes that it was at the yeshivah in Mir that he began to read, secretly, the forbidden works of the "enlightenment" literature, an activity which was soon discovered and which resulted in his being beaten and dismissed, only to continue his studies in another town, in another yeshivah. When he came to write his *Memoirs*, Kovner attributed his subsequent hatred of the Talmud and his dislike of Jewish traditions to the unhappy experiences of his youth.

At the age of eighteen, Kovner returned to his family in Vilna, where his father arranged for him to marry a simple, unattractive girl, the daughter of a local merchant. As in most arranged marriages for young Talmudic students of the time, Kovner's wife continued to work in her father's store while Kovner studied Talmud at the local synagogue and lived at his father-in-law's home, arousing in him the hope that Kovner would one day become a Rabbi. Meanwhile, Kovner's older brother, Saul, who later became a famous doctor, renowned for his work on the history of medicine, was living in Kiev, attending the medical school of the University. Saul frequently wrote to his brother, Avram, urging him to become more independent, not to rely solely on his father-in-law's bounty for a living. He suggested that Kovner move to Kiev and enter the University, advice which made the young Talmudist's mouth water for a taste of big city life. Leaving his wife, a young child, his wife's family and, at the same time, "borrowing" his mother-in-law's pearls which he pawned to provide money for the journey, Kovner, at twenty, arrived in Kiev with great expectations of passing the difficult entrance examinations to the University. He wasted no time studying Russian and other languages, striving to make up for the secular education which he had missed, especially in Russian literature which, up to that time, had been strange to him. But though he spent some four years in Kiev, he did not gain entrance to the University. Instead, however, he came under the influence of the nihilist Russian literary critic, D. I. Pisarev, whose anti-"art" and anti-romantic views appealed to Kovner and encouraged him to write several critical essays, the first of which appeared in the Hebrew journal, *Hameliz*, in 1864. In 1865, he succeeded in getting published a small book of critical essays discussing literature and natural science, to which he gave the title *Recollections*, and which produced a storm in Hebrew literary circles. An even greater sensation was caused by a second volume of criticism called *A Bintel Blumen*, in which Kovner attacked the Hebrew writers of the "enlightenment" who, according to him, were deifying the Hebrew language, paying homage to the form of the language rather than the content of what they wrote. The reaction of the older critics was violent. They accused Kovner of lacking originality in his literary thought, of adopting Pisarev's ideas lock, stock and barrel, and of

indiscriminately applying Pisarev's judgments to Hebrew literature, claiming that Kovner was only repeating after Pisarev that Hebrew literature should not devote itself to "art" or "pure poetry," but should become primarily a literature of the people.

In 1866, after severing all connections with his family in Vilna, including obtaining a divorce from his uneducated wife, Kovner moved to Odessa where he supported himself by giving private lessons and working on the staff of *Hameliz*. From time to time, the periodical published his controversial articles and essays but, before long, the pressure of attacks on his extreme views alarmed the editors who soon put a limit on the appearance of his writings. As a result, other Hebrew journals joined the attack and also rejected Kovner's writings. For a while, he published his works himself, but this proved to be too expensive for the inexperienced Kovner and, after a few efforts the enterprise failed.

Kovner, at this time, has been described as an egotist, a dogmatic, arrogant man who thought of himself as a "personage" and believed that he was a "reformer" of his unfortunate people. In truth, he lacked the strong will and dedication required for such a destiny, and he was not prepared to sacrifice himself for a "cause." Critical attacks upon his writings discouraged and embittered him.

The antagonism with which the Hebrew press attacked me, (he declared once in a conversation with the writer, J. D. Papirno), caused me to hate the establishment and to become indifferent to them. After I had acquainted myself with European languages, I realized at what a low state Hebrew literature existed. It became clear to me that to devote myself to Hebrew literature would mean to waste time and energy in a fruitless orchard. I turned away from Hebrew and decided to devote the rest of my professional life to Russian literature.

Kovner went much further. In Dec., 1867, he next comes into view as a result of a letter which he wrote to F. Kutzebue, the Governor General of Odessa. It reads as follows:

It is my sacred duty to call your attention, Your Excellency, to the circumstances surrounding a significant disturbance in the harmonious relations between Jews and Russians in the region under your jurisdiction. A Hebrew journal, *Hameliz*, is being published in Odessa. Under the guise of "enlightenment," this paper spreads ideas that are damaging to the Government. Under the mask of news, this paper incites disturbances. If it were printed in Russian, it would not last six months, but since it is printed in Hebrew, it has been successful for seven years and in this time has managed to disseminate dangerous ideas and fanaticism.

He further accused *Hameliz* of advocating fanatical Hasidism which, he reported, was sweeping the small towns of Russia where Jews were "cut off from the civilizing influence of Russian culture." He accused the editor of the periodical of proposing that the Jews buy Palestine and select a leader from the House of Rothschild to

organize an independent nation in Jerusalem. He also sent to the Governor issues of *Hameliz* translating articles which he believed to be damaging to the Russian establishment and ended his letter with these words, "...in order to avoid unpleasantness, I beg your Excellency to keep my name known only to you." The Governor complied with his request for secrecy, but, fortunately, did not act on the information. Kovner's accusations were later found to be entirely false.

Although the Jewish community was unaware of Kovner's treachery, they found the nature of his writings objectionable and gradually became estranged from him. Jewish homes in Odessa soon closed their doors to him, he lost his private students and, finally, he was forced to leave Odessa for another, smaller, town where he found employment as a tutor with a Jewish family who did not know of his previous activities.

In 1871, he moved on to St. Petersburg where he rented a room in the home of a poor Jewish widow by the name of Kanegisser whose daughter, Sonia, the eldest of several children, suffered from tuberculosis. To support himself, and to aid the poor widow and Sonia, with whom he had fallen in love, Kovner wrote articles and literary essays which several Russian journals accepted for publication. He also became a contributor to the popular liberal Russian newspaper *Golos* (The Voice) and, during the year 1872-1873, wrote a weekly column for its literary page. There he polemicized and wrote a number of critical attacks against the famous Russian novelist Feodor Dostoyevsky, who, he claimed, was showing "reactionary tendencies." In his writings, Kovner spared no one; he attacked the stock market, the banks, the railroads and capitalism in general, exposing their "sins" and accusing them of deceiving innocent, believing investors. His pen poured forth a seemingly endless stream of abuse, but he received so little compensation for his writing that he was eventually compelled to leave the newspaper and seek other work.

In 1874, through friends, Kovner secured a position in the St. Petersburg Discount and Credit Bank. The director of the bank, A. Zak, a leading financier of the time, was a patron of literature and art who used his bank connections in order to be helpful to Jewish artists and writers. However, Kovner, who had reluctantly accepted a job as a bank clerk, was not happy. He considered his salary too small, not enough for his worth, which he believed to be of high value. He felt superior to his fellow workers and looked at his own superiors with contempt, resenting the discipline without which no organization can function. It was customary to give increases to bank clerks at the end of each year, and after one year's employment, Kovner, too, received such an increase, but he was dissatisfied with the amount. He felt that his circumstances were degrading. From his grandiose dreams and hopes

of becoming a contributor to Russian literature, Kovner felt that he was now reduced to occupying an insignificant position where his talents were not appreciated. He felt that he was a small cog in a large wheel which kept rolling ahead without noticing his contribution. As time went on, his relationship with Zak, which at best had been only polite, became hostile. He realized that he might be fired from his insignificant post and be left without any means of support. This would also mean a hardship for the Kanegisser family to which he had become attached and to Sonia who had become his mistress. He wrote later, in his memoirs, that he spent sleepless nights worrying about his desperate situation and then decided to solve his money problems by embezzling a large sum from the bank. The idea appealed to him for another reason as well; he would be able to avenge himself on Zak, whom he blamed for his humiliating condition.

At the time of his employment in the St. Petersburg bank, Kovner was under the influence of Dostoyevsky's novel, *Crime and Punishment*. He envisioned himself as another Raskolnikov and imagined it was his duty, as a "superior person," to commit some sort of crime in order to protect and help his "Sonia" and the Kanegisser family. He drew up a plan of action which he discussed with his old uncle, Herz Bumarin, who still lived in Vilna and who agreed to help him. At the end of April, 1875, Kovner sent Bumarin a forged check for 168,000 rubles drawn on the St. Petersburg Discount and Credit Bank in the name of a commercial bank in Moscow. An endorsement was forged by Kovner and Bumarin was not questioned when he presented it for cash in Moscow. At the same time, Kovner left St. Petersburg for Moscow, together with Sonia Kanegisser, who, according to all reports, had no knowledge of Kovner's plans, believing that he was planning to emigrate to America. In Moscow, Kovner met his uncle who gave him the 168,000 rubles. He gave his uncle a share of 45,000 rubles and advised him to leave the country, which Bumarin did. Following his uncle's departure, Kovner, using a forged passport in the name of Boris Soloveichek, met Sonia and left for Kiev where they hoped to cross the border into Rumania. But, before leaving Moscow, Kovner could not resist writing a letter to the director of the St. Petersburg bank, detailing the crime and announcing to the victimized director that it was his intention to disgrace and embarrass him.

Guilty in my crime are you alone and no one else, (wrote Kovner). At heart I am an honest man and in my life I have never before committed any act resembling a crime. When I degraded myself by asking you for work, I thought you would understand the difference between a common clerk and a man who, like myself, stands high in European culture. But you did not give this any thought and I became your most bitter enemy... I decided to take vengeance... You will be called to account and I am full of joy. My heart warms when I think of how such

... a half crazy little Jew will become dethroned from his so called high position ... you will suffer.

Kovner was certainly far from a skilled criminal and when the train on which he was travelling to Kiev arrived at a small way station, his strange behavior soon attracted attention. When the train stopped to pick up passengers, Kovner dismounted to the platform, called for ten Jewish men to join him in forming a *minyan*, asked Sonia to agree to being declared his wife, and, after the ceremony, continued the journey. In the little town of Mohilev, Kovner again left the train, found a bank not far from the railroad station and went in to buy a draft for 10,000 rubles which he gave to Sonia with a dramatic gesture saying, "Take this with you in case anything happens to me."

In the little town of Mohilev it was very unusual for anyone to purchase a 10,000 ruble bank draft, so the bank, its suspicions aroused, notified the Secret Police that one Boris Soloveichik had purchased a large draft. This information was transmitted to the St. Petersburg police and when Kovner and Sonia finally arrived in Kiev, the police were waiting for them at the hotel. When they were arrested, Kovner at first claimed he was innocent, but the police soon found the embezzled money and Kovner confessed, absolving Sonia from any complicity. Then, stepping aside from his captors, in a melodramatic scene, Kovner snatched a gun which he had hidden under a bed pillow and attempted to commit suicide. He succeeded only in wounding himself slightly; he and Sonia were handcuffed and brought to Moscow for trial.

The circumstances that led to Avram and Sonia's arrest being clear, the investigation did not take long and, on the eighth of September, 1875, their trial took place. Every seat in the large hall of the courtroom was filled. Jews and representatives of the Russian press and intelligentsia in whom, of course, the Kovners had aroused great curiosity, attended every session. The foreman of the jury was the famous historian, N. Tichanravov. The prosecution was led by the young and able attorney, N. Muravyov, the same man who six years later achieved renown as the defending attorney of the murderer of Czar Alexander II. The lawyer for the defense was the also famous L. Kupernik, a converted Jew. During the trial Kovner was unusually calm. He repeated again and again that his wife was innocent and requested that she be freed without punishment. He spoke of his deprivations as a child and of his struggle to get an education. He claimed that he had taken his criminal action because he wished to rescue his beloved, seriously ill, Sonia, from poverty and to help her needy family, as well as to make amends to the family he had deserted in Vilna. It was his desire, he said, to secure for Sonia an independence which, without money, was impossible; and, again, because he wanted to "even accounts" with bank director Zak.

In pursuing the trial, the prosecutor, Muravyov, had no difficulty in impressing the jury. He read aloud from Kovner's articles in various newspapers, commented on Kovner's broad education, his literary achievements, his fame as a critic. Because of Kovner's place in the literary world, Muravyov argued, the crime was even more reprehensible. One outstanding and extraordinary characteristic which the prosecutor cited was Kovner's belief in his own invincibility. The prosecutor asked of the jury that they "take Kovner down from his high pedestal where he has always sat so comfortably . . . to destroy all his immoralizations with which he attempted to mask his guilt" and he also pointed to the danger to society of the "superman" ideas,

of men who believe that all is permissible to them and that cheating is an heroic accomplishment, their crime a good deed . . . Let your strict judgment show, (Muravyov concluded) that such "supermen" do not exist, that society throws them off and the Courts condemn them, and that this man, in the journals and newspapers, nourished a social morality which he himself trampled with his feet by such a criminal action.

In rebuttal, the defending attorney, Kupernik, in a masterly speech, described the circumstances which had motivated Kovner; his deep love for his sick wife, his fine attitude toward her poor family, his desire to make amends to his former family in Vilna. He spoke of the stifling atmosphere of the bank which had so debilitating an effect on the accused and he also pointed out the moral suffering which Kovner had withstood in the recent past;

Since Kovner made an attempt on his own life in Kiev, (Kupernik said), four months have passed, far from his wife, isolated from the world, spat upon in all the newspapers which not so long ago enlightened us with his articles. He has suffered in prison and he has suffered in thinking of his crime. Do you think this is small punishment? . . . I ask you only one thing, (summed up Kupernik, addressing the Judge), seek Justice, but do not be harsh.

The jury found Kovner guilty but, because of his attorney's appeals for clemency, suggested that his punishment be mitigated. Sonia was declared totally innocent and, in accordance with the jury's verdict, Kovner was sentenced to four years in prison with limited rights. The long and painful incarceration began at once. Kovner spent two years in the Moscow prison, the most difficult years of his life. His sick wife was not able to overcome their misfortune and shortly after his imprisonment she died. His acquaintances, his friends and his relatives, including his famous brother, Saul, deserted him. He became a lonely man. His life in prison was hard; other prisoners threatened and abused him because, unlike most of them, he was an educated man. However, as time passed, through his lawyer, Kovner was able to obtain books and papers which encouraged him to return to writing, a pastime which

helped to lighten the dreary days which followed. He was able to write a comedy and a short story...

At the end of January, 1877, while in prison, and after much introspection and self analysis, Kovner came to the conclusion that unlike Raskolnikov who, in *Crime and Punishment* repents his crime, he, himself, was fully justified in his actions. He thereupon requested his lawyer, L. Kupernik, to deliver a long letter to Dostoyevsky in which he described his life history, his romance with Sonia Kanegisser, the circumstances of her home life, of his own family, his services to the bank and his beliefs that he had been betrayed by "society." He explained what he thought were the true motives for his crime and why he would not apologize for his actions. He asked Dostoyevsky to submit to a St. Petersburg journal the comedy and the short story which he had written while in prison. In concluding his letter, Kovner accused the famous Russian writer of being anti-Semitic.

I would like to know why you come out with attacks on the Jews and why not against those who exploit us. I will never concede that disgraceful exploitation lies in Jewish hands. Can you not elevate yourself to the elementary thought that all citizens are alike and have equal rights and that all criminals should receive the same punishment? Why is the Russian better than the Jew?

Kovner's letter interested Dostoyevsky who answered with a long reply in which he wrote, "I fully believe in everything you have written me. You expressed yourself clearly regarding your crime, the details of which I had not known. There is something higher than logical thought to which every person must commit himself." He also defended himself against being called an anti-Semite and declared emphatically that he had never been one. The letter reached Kovner at the end of February, 1877, and that winter day was a happy one for the lonely writer, for the letter was the first of a series which he was able to exchange with the great Dostoyevsky before being sent to Siberia in June of that year.

As is known, being sent to Siberia was a common experience under the penal system of Czarist Russia. After two years in the Moscow prison, Kovner was given permission, because of ill health, to transfer to Siberia and to live and work wherever he wished in that cold, distant country. In the summer of 1877, he arrived in Tobolsk, where he was released as a prisoner and was told that he was "on his own." "Here in Siberia," Kovner wrote to a writer he had known in Moscow, "I hope to begin a new, honest life." But he did not stay long in Tobolsk. For some reason, he moved to Tomsk where he found work and for ten years managed to eke out a meager living.

In 1893, an important event took place in Kovner's life. He fell in love again, this time with a beautiful educated young Russian girl.



Kovner was fifty-one at the time and the ravages of life in prison and Siberia had not spared him physically or spiritually. Yet, although the girl was only twenty-three and a Christian, from a circle in which Kovner was a total stranger, she chose him. Whether it was because Kovner hoped to secure a government position, or because of his impending marriage, Kovner became a convert to Christianity two weeks before the ceremony. The marriage seems to have been a happy one; Kovner wrote to a friend, "We are happy in the full sense of the word. She is my devoted companion. She worries about me and keeps an eye on me. She is my total joy."

Shortly after this marriage, Kovner found himself without his government position; a new chief was not enthusiastic about having a converted Jew on his staff. Undaunted, Kovner wrote to his former prosecutor in court, N. Muravyov, who had since become Minister of Justice, and asked for help. The former prosecutor who, eighteen years before had shown such opposition to Kovner, now demonstrated warmth and humanity. He came to Kovner's aid with funds and, even more important, arranged for him to be given the freedom to return to live in western Russia. Kovner went back to St. Petersburg and once again began writing, using several pseudonyms, but his earnings were, as usual, inadequate to sustain himself and his wife and he soon was on the move again, going from Warsaw to Kiev, from Kiev to Odessa. Finally, thanks to Muravyov, he was able to obtain fairly secure work in the city of Lomza, where he remained.

The many years which Kovner had spent in Siberia, far from the centers of Jewish culture, had estranged him from other Jews. He had converted to Christianity, not because of a religious revelation or an interest in dogma, for he considered himself an atheist, but because he had wished to please his young, Christian wife and because he considered himself a "Russian" rather than a Jew.

As long as Jews are exiled from their homeland, (he wrote) . . . as long as Jews have no territory or language of their own, they would disappear as a nation were it not for other nations which have kept them apart and under oppression. Discontinue the disgraceful laws against Jews and they will merge with other nations where they find themselves and all differences between them and other people will disappear.

Living with a Christian wife in a Russian community, Kovner truly believed that he had cut himself off from his forebears.

But, as he grew older, a nostalgia for his Jewish past began to appear in his writings. In reminiscences of his childhood which he published in 1903 in a Russian journal, *Itoritsheski Vestnik*, Kovner still expresses a dislike for the Talmud, but one can detect a longing for the old Jewish life which is described with a warmth and feeling that one would not expect from a convert.

It may be that Kovner's yearning for his past was due to the fact that the people of Lomza did not fully accept him as a Russian: "I associate only with Russian people," he wrote to a friend, "but in their eyes I can see they consider me as a Jew and behind my back they curse me as 'Yid!'" In any case, although he continued to strive for acceptance in the Russian community, Kovner displayed an ambivalent interest in Jewish affairs. The rise of anti-Semitism in Russia disturbed him enough to induce him to write to Muravyov, petitioning him to work for the removal of the unjust restrictions enacted against Jews, but he still found it necessary to explain that his efforts in behalf of Jews were initiated, not because he was a former Jew, but because "as a human being I cannot tolerate the injustice which is done to Jews. In general I do not defend Jews or Judaism, but do defend people who are made to suffer and who are hunted without reason." He also wrote appealing letters in behalf of Jews to important public figures, among them Leo Tolstoy, but no one responded. Somehow, Kovner's suppressed Jewish experience would not remain quiet, it continued to disturb his new-found Russian contentment. When he heard of the Kishinev pogrom of April 17, 1903, he was completely shattered. In a letter to a friend, Rozanov, he could no longer contain himself. "I write to you under the painful impression of the Jewish pogrom in Kishinev. The ugly occurrence was ten days ago, but I still cannot calm my nerves. How much longer will such murders be allowed in Russia?" Yet, although Kovner was deeply shocked by the pogrom in Kishinev, he still criticized the Jewish community of the town for not fighting back,

Kishinev had 60,000 Jews, (he wrote), at least 20,000 of these were tradesmen and workers who could have mobilized themselves to fight the three to five hundred drunken Russians who attacked them. Had the Kishinev Jews armed themselves in self-defense they would have beaten off their opponents in one hour. What cowardice!

How Kovner appeared to his former friends at this time, is seen in the reminiscences of the famous Hebrew writer, D. J. Papirno, who saw him several times from 1900 to 1905. Papirno had met and corresponded with Kovner in their youth, long before the latter had any thoughts of converting to Christianity. Seeing him again after many years, in 1900, Papirno was struck by the change in his former Jewish colleague. There was no evidence of the Jew in either his appearance or manner; he could see no Jewish trait; the man seemed completely Russified. Papirno records that he told Kovner how highly he regarded Kovner's former writings in Hebrew and Yiddish, how influential had been his critical essays on Hebrew literature. He showed him the letters which Kovner had written him many years before;

Kovner asked me to lend him the letters and at the same time I noticed that he could not read them. He had forgotten the Hebrew language. For

more than thirty years he had neither read nor written a word in Hebrew. He said he would make an attempt to refresh his memory in order to reread his former letters and works.

Papirno was astonished that Kovner had severed himself so completely from the literature on which he had exerted so strong an influence. "How is it possible to forget a language in which you were such a master and in which you excelled?" he asked. Kovner explained that his disillusionment with Hebrew literature had been caused by his critics and his alienation by his long exile in Siberia. During the conversation, Papirno reports, he asked Kovner if he knew about the rise of anti-Semitism in Russia during the previous decade. Kovner replied, "I knew that you would ask me that question so I brought along a copy of a letter which I wrote to Muravyov, the Minister of Justice, concerning the Jewish question." Papirno writes, "... the letter was a masterpiece, everything was logically organized, one could see a thorough acquaintance with all the details of the Jewish condition. It was clear that the words came from a deeply affected heart filled with sympathy and empathy." Papirno reports that he then told Kovner of the revival which had taken place in Hebrew literature, that many new young talents were coming forth in the revived press, that the rise of Zionism was giving new life to the Hebrew language. Kovner listened and then made the following remark, "Too bad that all these talents and efforts are in vain . . . Hebrew literature is doomed." Papirno reminded Kovner that his pessimism was unwarranted, that his name was still remembered in Hebrew literature, still recorded in a new history of Hebrew literature. He reports that Kovner, an egotist to the end, was pleased with this information and made a note of the name of the publisher of the book in order to acquaint himself with its contents.

A year later, Kovner again paid a visit to Papirno. He returned the letters which he had borrowed and proved that he had made great strides in refreshing his memory of Hebrew. He showed Papirno a copy of the Bible which he had been studying to help him recall his forgotten Hebrew knowledge. He told Papirno that he still believed in himself and his writings, that he would never alter one word of what he had proclaimed. His hubris remained as before.

Avram Uri Kovner died in the summer of 1907, still adored and mourned by the faithful young wife for whom he had left Judaism. The Russian press which he had sought so much to impress took little notice of his death. However, the Hebrew and Jewish press remembered his contributions and printed many articles recalling the turbulent events of his life.

# *Prophet of the Lord: Dumas Fils' Vision of Israel*

BENJAMIN SZOLD LEVIN

*"Le Juif Errant ne marche plus; il est arrivé."*

A LITTLE OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, A character named Daniel entered a scene on a Paris stage and announced, "The Wandering Jew is no longer on the march; he has arrived!" He proclaimed, in effect, that the great and terrible day of the Lord was come (Malachi 3:23). The play, *La Femme de Claude* (*Claude's Wife*), was first presented on January 16, 1873, eight years before Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation* and the Hovevei Zion movement, twenty-two years before Herzl's *The Jewish State*, and twenty-four years before the first Zionist Congress in Basel. The prophet was Alexandre Dumas fils,\* considered by many to be the foremost French playwright of the nineteenth century. He was the son of Alexandre Dumas, the author of *The Three Musketeers*, many other well-known novels, and also many less known works, including *Isaac Laquedem*.

What were the sources of Dumas' prophetic inspiration? To answer this question we must first understand the historical background.

## *Historical Background*

To appreciate the Zionistic<sup>1</sup> significance of Alexandre Dumas fils (as well as of such a writer as George Eliot), it is simplest to work backward from that great turning point in modern Jewish history, indeed, in general history, the assassination of the Czar-Emancipator Alexander II in March, 1881. He was succeeded by the reactionary Alexander III, whose reign ushered in a wave of pogroms. In May, 1882, the Czar proclaimed the notorious May Laws, nullifying the previous trend toward

---

\* This article is an attempt to bring to the attention of the public the play, *La Femme de Claude*, as soon as possible after the centenary of its original production, rather than a thorough piece of research either on early Zionism or on Dumas fils. Throughout this article, the assumption has been made that Dumas fils, as a member of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, had the opportunity to become familiar with subjects discussed by the Alliance, but that no such assumption might be made about his familiarity with Jewish affairs in general.

1. The word "Zionism" was not used until 1886, according to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. XII, p. 666, where it is stated that "It seems that the designation (i.e. Zionism), to distinguish the movement from the activity of the Hovevei Zion, was first used by Matthias Acher (Nathan Birnbaum) in his paper 'Selbstemancipation,' 1866..."

---

BENJAMIN SZOLD LEVIN, a native of Baltimore, lived in Palestine for eleven years under the Mandate and is now a life member of the ZOA.

equality for Jews and imposing various restrictions upon them. In that same year, Leo Pinsker published his essay, *Auto-Emancipation*, which led to the formation of the Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) movement and the founding of the early pioneer Jewish colonies in Palestine (1882).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, any expression of Zionist feeling before 1881, when there was no organized international Zionist movement, is completely different in character and significance from Zionism after 1881,<sup>3</sup> a principle that must be borne in mind with regard to the particular centuries referred to here.

During the sixty years before 1881, various individuals here and there gave expression to ideas of a Zionist character. A rather lengthy list, including both Jews and Christians, might be drawn up of persons who worked out suggestions for the resettlement of Jews in Palestine.<sup>4</sup> Most of their remarks attracted little attention at the time and were soon forgotten, remaining buried until brought to light by later Zionist historical research. In fact, before 1860, in the absence of any organization with Jewish interest on an international scale, there was no practical way for public opinion to crystallize on any far-reaching plans for Jewish welfare.

In 1860, severe fighting broke out in Syria between the Maronites (Uniat Roman Catholics, i.e., using Syriac rather than Latin liturgy) and the Druze,<sup>5</sup> especially in Lebanon and Damascus. Thousands of Christians were massacred, and France intervened to save the Lebanese Christians, compelling the Turks to grant the Lebanese local autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. In that year, a non-Jewish French official, Ernest Laharanne, a member of the secretariat of Napoleon III, published a work entitled "*La Nouvelle question d'Orient. Reconstitution de la Nationalité Juive*" ("The New Eastern Question: Reestablishment of the Jewish Nation"), in which he advocated the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and some adjacent lands.<sup>6</sup> Moses Hess' remark

2. A few attempts at agricultural settlements had been made before 1882, but none lasted except the Mikveh Israel agricultural school (1870) and Petah Tikvah (1878).

3. The term "Zionistic" will here be used for the earlier sentiment favoring the return of the Jews to the land of Israel, as distinguished from Zionism in the late nineteenth and twentieth century sense of the word.

4. Among the most interesting of these proto-Zionists (who are not discussed elsewhere in this paper) are Mordecai Manuel Noah, American Consul at Tunis and later sheriff of the State of New York, who, in 1844, published his *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews*, and had even tried, in 1825, to establish a kind of training "state" (*hakhsharah*) on Grand Island near Niagara Falls; Warder Cresson, an American Quaker who became a Jewish proselyte, went to Palestine, and, in 1852, tried to found an agricultural colony there; Joseph Salvador of France; and Rabbi Judah Alkalay of Croatia. Among non-Jews there is Benedetto Musolino of Italy, who, in 1870, advocated the return of the Jews to Palestine.

5. Druze is a plural form. Singular: a Durziyya.

6. See, Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (New York, 1959), p. 621, note 13: "Ernest Laharanne was the private secretary of Napoleon III of France during the period of the growing influence of that country on Syria."

about this work,<sup>7</sup> which appeared shortly after the massacres in Syria, might suggest that Laharanne was motivated by the thought that a Jewish state in Palestine and adjacent territory would provide a better regime in that region than rule by either local Christians, Mohammedans or Druze. Other writers<sup>8</sup> on Laharanne make no mention of the coincidence that Laharanne published his proposal in the same year as that in which the Lebanese massacres brought about French intervention. Two years later, in 1862, Hess, then living in Paris, wrote *Rom und Jerusalem* (Rome and Jerusalem), in which he advocated a restored Jewish state in Palestine, quoting Laharanne in support of this proposal.<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \*

Three factors converged to produce an atmosphere in which it was natural for Dumas  *fils* to give to the Jewish element in *La Femme de Claude* the form which he did: his father, the fighting, in 1870–1871, with the Germans and, then, with the communards, and his friendship for the Jewish people, as demonstrated by his connection with the Alliance Israélite Universelle.

### *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and its Impact on French Public Opinion*

In 1860, in Paris, six men—Aristide Astruc, Isidor Cahen, Jules Carvallo, Narcisse Leven, Eugène Manuel, and Charles Netter<sup>10</sup> founded the Alliance Israélite Universelle to promote the welfare of Jews throughout the world.

From the beginning the Alliance numbered many Protestants among its friends, clergymen as well as laymen. Dr. Pétavel of Neuchâtel and his sons, who at once sent their good wishes to the infant society, deserve particular mention. Among other Christian subscribers, Alexandre Dumas, the younger, and Jules Simon, must be mentioned: they remained faithful adherents until their deaths.<sup>11</sup>

The Alliance provided the first public platform for suggestions, including those of a Zionistic nature, regarding the general welfare of the Jews. Between 1860, when the Alliance was founded, and 1873, when *La Femme de Claude* appeared, proposals to promote the settlement of Jews in Palestine reached the Alliance from several persons, four of

7. Moss Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, 2nd. edition (Leipzig, 1899), p. 79 ff.

8. Natan M. Gelber, *Ha-Poel Ha-Zair*, July 26, 1960.

9. Moses Hess, *Op. cit.*, pp. 80–88.

10. Not including Jules Simon, who was *not* among the founders of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (though he became a life-long member), as might be mistakenly inferred from the reference in the article by A. Hermoni in *Hashiloah*, vol. 21, p. 56.

11. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, I, p. 414. The article is by Jacques Bigart, Secretary-General of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris, France.

whom are especially noteworthy: Pétavel, Dunant, Kalischer, and Netter.<sup>12</sup>

1. Abram-François Pétavel (1796–1867) was a Protestant pastor of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. In true missionary spirit, he not only hoped for the conversion of the Jews, but even thought that it was imminent. He believed that what had kept the Jews from seeing the truth of Christianity was the age-long discrimination against them in Christian countries, as well as their dispersion throughout the world. If Jews could only be emancipated everywhere and brought back to Palestine, it was obvious to him that conversion would follow as a matter of course. It must, however, be borne in mind that conversion was *not a condition* of his friendship for the Jews. He was in favor of their emancipation and restoration to Zion in any case. In 1864, he published a poem, "*La Fille de Sion*" (The Daughter of Zion), in which he refers, by implication, to Adolphe Crémieux, a prominent French political figure who was president of the Central Committee of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1863–1867, and Jules Carvallo, a civil engineer who was one of the six original founders of the Alliance in 1860.

2. Jean Henri Dunant (1828–1910), whose parents were pious members of a Swiss Evangelical Protestant sect, was a business man and philanthropist of Geneva, Switzerland, who, in 1862, the same year in which he published "*Un Souvenir de Solferino*," a book suggesting that a neutral organization be established to aid wounded soldiers in time of war, also attended a meeting of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. The next year he urged the Alliance to adopt his proposal to settle Jews in Palestine, and in that very same year the Geneva Convention, following Dunant's suggestion, established the International Red Cross. In 1866, Dunant published his plan for settling Jews in Palestine, in his "*Projet de Société Internationale Universelle pour la Rénovation de l'Orient*" (Project for an International World Organization for the Restoration of the Orient).

3. Zevi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874), a scholarly rabbi of Thorn in West Prussia, travelled about to collect money and to establish associations for the founding of agricultural colonies in Palestine. Kalischer's views, more widely publicized than any others hitherto expressed on this subject, strongly influenced the Alliance in its decision to send one of its members, Charles Netter, to Palestine to found an agricultural school for Jews, near Jaffa. Netter started this school, Mikveh

---

12. Since there is no evidence that Ernest Laharanne, Moses Hess, or Joseph Salvador ever made serious attempts to interest the Alliance Israélite Universelle in the colonization of Palestine, and since there is no reason for presuming that Dumas fils had any knowledge of contemporary Jewish affairs except through his connection with the Alliance, there is no need to introduce detailed accounts of those three persons.



Israel, in 1870, the very year in which France was defeated by Prussia at Sedan. The significance of this coincidence will appear later.

4. Charles Netter (1826–1882), one of the six founders of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, seems to have thought of the idea of an agricultural school in Palestine independently.

To these four personalities there should, perhaps, be added Albert Cohn (1814–1877), who settled in Paris in 1836, when he began a life-long connection with the Rothschild family. Three of the children of Baron James de Rothschild received their instruction in Hebrew and Jewish history from him, and in 1839 he took his pupils on a trip to the Holy Land. On his return, he was placed in charge of the extensive charities of the French Rothschild family, a position which he held for life. Later, he made five more trips to the Holy Land, where he personally saw the needs of the local Jewish population that could be helped by the Rothschild funds. He was certainly a man about whose activities Dumas *filis* might well have known.

Another man, though he seems neither to have been affiliated with the Alliance Israélite Universelle, nor to have been in France, also deserves mention. Joseph Schwarz (1804–1865) was born in Germany and went to Palestine in 1833. He became the chief authority of the time on the geography, fauna, flora, and geology of that country, and attempted to discover the Ten Tribes, which he thought might be found in Africa (Abyssinia, Central and South Africa) and in Yemen, Tibet and China.<sup>13</sup> Although there is no evidence that Dumas *filis* had ever heard of Schwarz, the parallel between Schwarz's suppositions about the Ten Tribes and Daniel's projected travels, as stated in Act II, Scene 1, of *La Femme de Claude*, is certainly striking.

This is a brief outline of the Jewish background with which Dumas might well have been acquainted through his affiliation with the Alliance Israélite Universelle. We now turn to the second important influence on Dumas: the general French situation during the years immediately preceding the writing of the play in 1873.

### *The Franco-Prussian War*

The defeat of France in 1870 cut deeply into the French soul. The Germans imposed an indemnity of 5,000,000,000 francs and kept their soldiers in the country until the debt was paid. Baron Alphonse de Rothschild "became the head of the syndicate of French bankers which guaranteed the payment of the indemnity of five milliard francs by

13. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, XI p. 119, article, "Schwarz, Joseph." See also, his *Tebu'ot ha-Arez* (Eng. tr. by Isaac Leiser, *A Descriptive and Historical Sketch of Palestine*, [Philadelphia, 1850]).

France to Germany. It was especially through his ability that France was enabled to pay the indemnity within a very short time.<sup>14</sup>

After the surrender of the French forces, revolutionary *communards* attempted to take control of Paris. At the order of Marshal Macmahon, acting under President Thiers, 17,000 citizens of Paris were shot down and 51,000 more were arrested and imprisoned, to be shot or transported at a later date.

And all this time the Germans, encamped on the heights around Paris, were enjoying the sight of the people they had defeated slaughtering each other by the thousands. Is it too much to see in this the influence of Germany? Is it possible to believe that Bismarck had nothing to do with this insurrection which so greatly strengthened his hand? . . . And it is not impossible that smouldering fires were fanned into flame by German intrigue.<sup>15</sup>

Whether this description is historically true or not, this is what the French believed.

### *Dumas' Handling of the Play*

Dumas *filis* felt keenly the dismay and chagrin of the French people after their defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the resultant loss of Alsace-Lorraine. The purpose of *La Femme de Claude* was a call to the French people, in the tone of the Old Testament prophets and with the use of New Testament imagery, to repent of the error of their decadent ways which had brought on this terrible national disaster. Césarine, the principal female character, is not only unfaithful to her husband, Claude Ruper, but also traitorous to her country. Her husband is an inventor, who has discovered how to make a new kind of military weapon, which his country must acquire. A sly agent of a corporation (which eventually turns out to have foreign connections), Cantagnac, tells Césarine that he is determined to acquire the secret of this weapon by fair means or foul. These two villains are balanced by Claude's Jewish friend and colleague, Daniel, whose daughter, Rébecca, loves Claude.

The play opens with Césarine returning home after an absence. She tells the maid, Edmée (an inveterate keyhole listener), who admits her, that she wants to reestablish her relationship to her husband and restore his love for her. This resolution is soon put to the test by Cantagnac, who asks Césarine how much she wants in order to sell him her husband's invention secretly. Césarine thinks he must be spoofing, but

14. In the preface to *La Femme de Claude* (p. 203), there is the following reference: ". . . on the wall of the banquet hall, the German wrote these four words: 'Five billions of debt.' And the Beast (i.e., *Césarine-Kaiserin*) showed him the Jew (i.e., Rothschild) who, on the other wall, wrote these magic words, in the midst of fanfare: 'Forty-two billions of credit!'" Thus, the figure of Daniel is, in a sense, a *merci bien* to Rothschild.

15. Lucy Menzies' appendix to Victor Duruy's *A Short History of France*, tr. by Jane and Menzies (London: 1917), p. 521.

Cantagnac assures her that he represents a joint-stock company with a capital of several billions that aspires to rule the world (*devenir les arbitres du monde*). He adds that he has already sounded out Claude and found him too honorable and circumspect a man to win over directly. "Fortunately these great men, idealistic and naive, are nearly always, in one form or another, submissive to women. When they escape feminine action, they are invulnerable."

When Césarine hesitates to yield to this line, Cantagnac shows her that he can compel her to do his will. This he does by reeling off a detailed biography of her career, which he has carefully prepared beforehand, with special attention to her amorous errors. This biography is the key to a basic understanding, not only of the interpretation explicitly expressed by Dumas in the preface, in his letter to M. Cuvillier-Fleury, but also of what one might call Midrashic interpretations not stated by Dumas but strongly suggested by the time, place, background, and circumstances in which the play was written.

Of particular interest is Cantagnac's account of Césarine's birth and ancestry.

*Cantagnac:* As for you, dear Madame—we don't have to convince you, since we can compel you.

*Césarine:* Let's see how.

*Cantagnac:* You are the daughter of the Baron and Baroness of Fieradlen (sic: for Vieradlern), which means in German "of the four eagles," for you come from a very old Bavarian family. Legend has it that one of your ancestors became the standard bearer of Caesar [Dumas could not say Kaiser] after the defeat of Ariovistus, and since that time there has always been someone in your family named César like your father or Césarine like yourself. Some grand marriages in the past have made things come out so that, with a microscope, one might discover a drop of royal blood in your veins, which has more than a little to do with making you believe that you were not like everybody else in the world. You were born in Paris in 1848 [the year of the bloody revolution against King Louis Philippe]; your father and mother were soon divorced . . . your grandmother took care of you. At fifteen years of age you looked like eighteen. You were beautiful with that strange, provocative beauty which it is hard for a man to resist, and I don't know anybody but myself who can resist it; but I am not a man: I am a machine. It is, therefore, useless to look at me the way you do. It is a waste of beauty.

Cantagnac then adds details of Césarine's love life that lay her open to blackmail, but are unnecessary for our purposes.

In the middle of the play, Claude's friend, Daniel, enters with his daughter, Rébecca, and announces that they are going to leave the country:

*Daniel:* Now, I believe, after exhaustive research, that at last I know the truth on this subject and that, perhaps, I am called on to reconquer our fatherland . . . I have a chance to see countries and go

from China to the Salt Lake,<sup>16</sup> and from the Salt Lake to the Great Sahara. Each one has his ideal or his folly. May He, whoever He be, guide us, and, as we have been saying for centuries on our holidays: "Next year in Jerusalem."

*Césarine*: (with her usual raillery): What surprises me, Monsieur Daniel, is that the Wandering Jew, condemned to be always on the go, has not had this idea before you.

*Daniel*: The Wandering Jew is no longer on the march; he has arrived.

Rébecca, whose love for Claude must not be consummated, both because he is already married and is of a different faith, shows filial honor to her father by accompanying him on his quest. She also tells Claude that, though she will never be united to him in this life, she will remain celibate all her life, and finally join him in the world to come.

Césarine manages to get hold of her husband's plan for the new secret weapon. She is ready to toss the documents through an open window to Cantagnac, the German agent, when she is discovered by her husband and shot, as he exclaims, "Thief!" (*Voleuse*).

Césarine obviously personifies the moral rot that Dumas saw in the decadent French society of his day. In the preface to the play, Dumas compares her to the Beast in the Book of Revelations, (Rev. 17:7) with seven heads and ten horns. Each horn had a diadem on which was written in big letters the word: Prostitution.

Many critics drew the conclusion that Dumas *filis* preached the salvation of French morality through the infliction of death on unfaithful wives by their outraged husbands.<sup>17</sup> In a deeper sense, however, she symbolizes the enemy.<sup>18</sup> "Césarine" is the French form of *Kaiserin* and, as such, might well be regarded as a transvestite representation of Kaiser Wilhelm I, the King of Prussia, who raised his status to that of Kaiser at the expense of France. The shot that kills Césarine at the end of the play may be regarded, not merely as the expression of the righteous indignation of a deceived husband, but, also, as a symbolic way of saying that some French patriot ought to put a bullet through the Kaiser's body. "*Voleuse*!" in this *derash* means "Thief of Alsace-Lorraine!"

With regard to Cantagnac, Dumas said in his preface (p. 206), "Why didn't I tell you at once to what nation this man belonged? Wouldn't it have been simpler in the theater where one has no time to lose? Because I could not tell you. You don't realize how our arts are under the censorship of that anonymous power that you have not recognized."<sup>19</sup>

16. Possibly the Great Salt Lake of Utah, rather than the Dead Sea, since the Mormons were supposed then to claim descent from the Ten Lost Tribes.

17. Compare "*Ziyyoniyut Mukdemet*" (Early Zionism), by A. Hermoni, article in *Hashiloah*, XXI, July-December 1909, pp. 52-60.

18. This is an example of the Midrashic approach, which gives a more intense significance to the drama than the obvious sense (*peshat*) of what Dumas *filis* wrote.

19. "*Nos arts eux-mêmes sont sous la censure de cet anonyme que tu n'as pas reconnu.*" Cantagnac tells Césarine that he is the modest, though smart enough,

He goes on to say that if the play had contained the slightest explicit word stating positively who that man was, the play would have been banned by the government. That censorship, explicitly indicated by Dumas, is the justification for a Midrashic approach to the understanding of the play through the derivation of meanings that Dumas himself has nowhere expressly stated.

Thus, Dumas *films* contrasts three varieties of nationalism: the romantic, decadent, ineffective nationalism of France; the brutal, military nationalism of Prussia; and the idealistic, spiritual nationalism of Daniel, the Wandering Jew, seeking his national home, leading to the eventual reestablishment of the nation of Israel, which should benefit not only Jews but humanity as a whole.

### *The Influence of La Femme de Claude*

*La Femme de Claude* is the earliest literary expression of the Zionist theme by an outstanding man of letters. Three years later, in 1876, George Eliot, in her novel, *Daniel Deronda*, produced the first great artistic treatment of Zionism in English literature. The hypothesis that Dumas *films* influenced George Eliot has a certain plausibility.<sup>20</sup> At any rate, the name of the principal Jewish character, Daniel, is the same in both books. There is firmer evidence that Dumas *films* influenced Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who provided important and timely help to the first struggling colonists in Palestine during the eighties. In a letter to Edmond de Rothschild, Dumas *films* said:

When a People has established a whole moral code for humanity on ten short biblical verses, then it can truly regard itself as the Chosen People of the Lord . . . To what purpose, I ask myself, should I devote the whole of my existence were I a member of that Race . . . and my answer is that I should have but one idea, to enter again into the possession of the land to which I owed my origins and my traditions, there to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem . . . To that idea I have given living and bodily form in the person of Daniel.<sup>21</sup>

agent of a newly formed corporation (*société anonyme*). *Société anonyme* means, literally, a joint-stock company or corporation, but here we must note the parallel term *anonyme* used for the power behind the government censorship. The inference from a similarity of phrases (*gezerah shavah*) is a standard principle of Midrash. When we read *anonyme* in the preface and again in the play itself (*anonyme anonyme* as the Talmud would have expressed it), we infer that just as the *anonyme* of the preface means German power, so also does the *anonyme* of the play. According to the Talmud, the repetition of the same word in two different passages indicates that the lessons one learns from one of those passages contributes to the lesson to be learned from the other.

20. Hayyim Orlan, "Reshimot ve zייyunim," *Hadoar*, 16th Shebat 5729-February 4, 1969.

21. This letter is to be found in André Maurois' *Les Trois Dumas* (English title, *The Titans*, tr. by Gerard Hopkins, p. 392), in which he says that "On the strength of this letter we may perhaps be allowed to say that Dumas *films* was one of the earliest Zionists." Maurois, however, draws the inverse conclusion—that Baron Rothschild influenced Dumas. Since, however, Dumas was older than Edward de Rothschild, it

*Critical Views and Appreciations of La Femme de Claude*

*La Femme de Claude* (like *Daniel Deronda*) has fared badly at the hands of critics. René Doumic, in *Portraits d'Ecrivains* (1897), writes:

Suddenly it seems as if M. Dumas has lost his footing. Such pieces as *La Femme de Claude* and *L'Etrangère* are veritable monstrosities. One asks the author where he has seen these wandering Jews looking all over the world for the cradle of their tribe (p. 30).

And Maurois writes:

The fact of the matter is that the play is worthless. The theft of military secrets, in the most improbable circumstances, has all the defects of a bad "thriller." Claude is too perfect; Césarine too evil. At the beginning of his career, because he was making use of personal memories and emotions, Dumas could combine into an acceptable mixture private bias and reality. Now, obsessed by a number of abstract ideas, he was producing problem-plays which had nothing to do with real life.<sup>22</sup>

A careful reading the play and of the preface makes it hard to accept Maurois' judgment. Claude may be too perfect for Maurois, but he was not too perfect for Dumas. On page 204 of the preface he writes that Claude is not merely a mechanic, an inventor, a man: he is Man in the grand sense of the word (*c'est l'Homme dans le grand sens du mot*); he is what you and I should always be, to-day more than ever; he is the Frenchman, he is France. And on page 210 he says: "Conscience, that's what Claude is" (*La Conscience, c'est Claude*).

Is Césarine really too evil? If we allow Dumas' prophetic inspiration with regard to Daniel (as Maurois does when he calls him a Zionist decades before there was a Zionist movement), we may admit that he is prophetic also through Césarine. If we go back to Dumas' source, the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Revelations, we find that the Beast symbolizes a succession of kings and (with a little modernization) dictators.

Rébecca, presumably, represents Woman in Dumas' "grand sense of the word." In particular, she stands for Dumas' acknowledgement of the efforts of dedicated Frenchwomen toward relieving the sufferings of the victims of the war and violence of the years 1870-1871. When Cantagnac (Act II, Scene 1) sneeringly asks her whether she bore arms during the last war, she replies: "No; but I nursed and sometimes healed those who did bear them." Nevertheless, her decision to remain a life-long virgin, giving up all hope of marriage, has never been a Jewish ideal.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, from the Christian point of view, the open decla-

is more likely that the older man influenced the younger, as is indeed the view expressed in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (XIV:342.)

22. The failure of men of letters like Doumic and Maurois to derive a valuable message from the *peshtal* (plain meaning of Dumas' text) is another illustration of the usefulness of the Midrashic approach.

23. When looking for possible sources of influence, one should not overlook Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, with the Jewish characters, Isaac of York and his daughter,

ration of intense love between her and Claude sounds like an innovation with respect to New Testament teachings.

Only in Hebrew publications has there been any genuine appreciation of the play. A. Hermoni wrote a beautiful essay on it in *Hashiloah*, cited above, and another in his recent booklet *Be-Ikvot Ha-Biluim* (In the Footsteps of the Bilu Pioneers [Jerusalem, 1952]). Hermoni was at one time a pupil of the Mikveh Israel agricultural school, where the Alliance tradition has persisted. *La Femme de Claude* was translated recently into Hebrew by I. Fein and H. Orlan, and appeared in *Hadoar*.

To bring this study of *La Femme de Claude* to a close, I offer a special interpretation of the writing of Dumas père that seems to have influenced his son's treatment of the Jewish theme in that play.

*Influence of Dumas père on his son's play: a Midrashic Interpretation*

Hitherto, the purpose of Dumas fils in introducing into *La Femme de Claude* the role of the Zionist Jew, Daniel, has been interpreted in terms of the author's affiliation with the newly organized Alliance Israélite Universelle and the sprouting up, during the decade 1860-1870, of the idea of the return of the Jewish people to Zion. Nevertheless, the reference to the Wandering Jew in the play suggests an intriguing basis for a deeper interpretation.

Alexandre Dumas père started a novel called *Isaac Laquedem*. It begins like a regular Dumas romance, in the year 1469, on Holy Thursday, in Rome, when Paul II is Pope. A mysterious stranger approaches the guards on the road leading to the Pope's palace and asks admittance, a piece of bread, and a glass of water. Somehow, he worms his way through the crowd and gets the special attention of the Pope. As the pilgrim stranger kneels before the Pope, the stranger's long hair falls away from his forehead, showing the sign of flame that the angel of celestial wrath imprints on the foreheads of the cursed. "Are you then Cain?" cries the Pope. "I wish I had been Cain or were now Cain! Cain was not immortal." He then explains that he is the man who once refused to let the "man-God," bent under the weight of his heavy cross, sit down for a minute on the bench in front of his door. In expiation of that hard-hearted act he cannot die, but is doomed to march on through the ages. "I am an accursed man! I am the wandering Jew!" Dumas finishes this chapter with, "This time it is not the story of a man that we are telling—it is the history of humanity."

The story, reverting to antiquity, is told in romantic form. After

---

Rebecca, whose name is said to have been suggested by the beautiful Philadelphia Jewess, Rebecca Gratz. Like Dumas' Rébecca, Miss Gratz never married. It would be a very romantic piece of literary history if Dumas' Rébecca should turn out to be a third-generation reincarnation (*gilgul*) of Rebecca Gratz! Moreover, it is worth testing the assumption that George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* is a *gilgul* of Dumas' Daniel.



the High Priest pronounces sentence of death on Jesus and turns him over to Pilate for execution, the beautiful young wife of Pilate, Claudia Procula, impressed with Jesus, begs her husband to spare him—just as the daughter of the tyrant Rufus begs her father to spare Rabbi Ishmael's life in the story of the ten martyrs during Hadrian's time. Pilate—like Rufus—is inflexible, and commands Jesus to carry the cross to the place of execution. Exhausted by his burden, Jesus sees a bench in front of a door, with a man sitting on it. "Isaac Laquedem," says Jesus, "it is thou?" "Yes," replies Isaac. "What dost thou want with me, magician?" "I am thirsty . . . Give me a little water from thy well." "My well is dry." Jesus then begs for help in carrying his cross and for a place to rest on the bench, or at least for Isaac to reach him a stool. To all these requests Isaac responds, "No! March! On thy way!" Then Jesus, losing patience, cries, "Wretch! Thou art the one who shall march. Thou shalt march until the Day of Judgment. Thou shalt be the WANDERING JEW."

Such a story, of course, no matter how one looks at it, strikes a Jew as being anti-Jewish, all the more so as it is written in the lively style of Dumas' romantic historical novels. That Dumas *père* himself is not known to have been anti-Semitic does not change this impression.

Of particular interest is the note appended to the second volume (page 235):

The publication of this work, which appeared in "*Le Constitutionnel*" about 1853, having been prohibited under the Empire, Alexandre Dumas waited for a propitious time to continue his work; but, as we know, death took him away during the war of 1870, and the important work that he had conceived remained unfinished.

This publisher's note suggests that Dumas *fils* conceived the idea of expressing his filial piety by completing his father's unfinished work. *La Femme de Claude* was written less than three years after the death of Dumas *père*. But the son, remember, was such a friend of the Jews that he became a member of the recently formed Alliance Israélite Universelle. His continuation of his father's theme, therefore, had to fulfill two requirements: it must take up his father's theme of the Wandering Jew, and it must say something that would make Jews feel better than they could from the manner in which his father had treated that story. Such a supposition gives a deeper, richer meaning to Daniel's pronouncement that "The Wandering Jew is no longer on the march; he has arrived." Dumas *fils* has turned the Wandering Jew from a mean, despairing fanatic into a hopeful, active idealist. The ancient curse has been lifted.

# CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Quarterly Journal  
of  
The Rabbinical Assembly  
and  
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America

*Contemporary Jewish life, law and letters  
Jewish theology, education and philosophy  
Israel-Diaspora relationships*

## IN CURRENT AND FORTHCOMING ISSUES:

*The Conservative Movement in Israel*

*Women in Jewish Law*

*Conversion: Our Attitude and Practice*

*Abraham Joshua Heschel: A Yahrzeit Tribute*

Communications/Book Reviews

## CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

3080 Broadway  
New York, N.Y. 10027

Subscription: \$5.00 a year  
\$9.00 for two years  
\$12.00 for three years

Enclosed is \$. . . . . for a subscription to

**CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM** for . . . 1 yr. . . . 2 yrs. . . . 3 yrs.

Name . . . . .

Address . . . . .

City and State . . . . .

. . . . . Zip Code . . . . .

### JEWISH LITERATURE WAS DIFFERENT

*Review-Essay by* BERNARD J. BAMBERGER

*History of Jewish Literature.* By ISRAEL ZINBERG. Translated and edited by Bernard Martin. Case-Western Reserve University Press. Cleveland, Ohio, 1972.

#### I

THE JEWS, AS EVERYONE KNOWS, HAVE BEEN a great people for writing and reading books. But though they produced a vast amount of literature, they were strangely slow in writing *about* literature. The earliest instance that I have found occurred early in the tenth century, when Saadia ben Joseph, at the age of twenty, compiled a Hebrew rhyming dictionary. For this work he later wrote an introduction dealing with Hebrew poets and poetry. Saadia became the leading Jewish personality of his time, and his writings on Bible, law, liturgy, and philosophy have made him immortal. But his work on literature did not start a trend.

About two centuries later, the Spanish Jewish poet, Moses ibn Ezra, wrote a treatise in Arabic on Hebrew poetics; and there were a few lesser known efforts by Italian Jews of the Renaissance. But for untold centuries no Jew attempted an organized account of Jewish literature—just as no Jew after Josephus undertook a history of the Jews until the nineteenth century.

It was a Gentile savant, Giulio Bartolucci, assisted by a learned Jewish convert to Christianity, Giovanni Battista, who first assembled extensive information about Jewish books and authors, laying the bibliographical foundation that had to precede any sort of literary history. Bartolucci's pioneer effort inspired a more systematic and accurate work of the same sort by Johann Christian Wolf a few decades later. And Wolf, in turn, provided invaluable resources to Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907), “the father of Jewish bibliography.” It was Steinschneider who produced the first historical survey of Jewish literature, published in a German encyclopedia in 1850.

From that time on, scholars have delved into many aspects of the subject. Innumerable books and monographs have appeared. General surveys of the entire field, of a more or less popular character,

---

BERNARD J. BAMBERGER is *rabbi-emeritus* of Temple Shaaray Tefila, New York, N.Y.

were produced by Gustav Karpeles in German, and by Israel Abrahams and Meyer Waxman in English. By far the most notable endeavor in this field is the monumental study of Jewish literature in Europe by Israel Zinberg, published a generation ago in Yiddish, and now appearing in English. The publication of this important work, already translated into Hebrew, (three volumes of a projected twelve are now available) affords an occasion for some general observations about Jewish literature and how it should be studied and evaluated.

All the works just mentioned, though different in scope, character, and style, are alike in two important respects. They all treat what is called "post-Biblical literature." By common agreement, the Bible is the greatest literary creation of our people, and much of subsequent Jewish literature is based upon it; but these writers chose not to treat it in their compendia. Perhaps they felt that ample information about the Bible was already available and did not require repetition; or they may have considered the Bible to be the province of specialists. Or was it that they regarded the Bible as too special, too sacred, to be treated with the same critical approach used on the general category of Jewish literature? For whatever reason, they limited their histories to literature after the Biblical period.

Second, these historians dealt with a vast amount of written material which we should not ordinarily classify as literature. The usual handbooks, e.g., on English or French or American literature treat of belles lettres—poetry, drama, fiction, and literary essays. Works of biography, history, science, philosophy, and politics are also included, but only to the extent that they are deemed to have literary merit. (This generalization applies also to recent books on modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature). For these purposes, "literature" may be defined as material which we read for its own sake, in contrast to writings which we consult or study solely for the sake of their subject matter. More specifically, the qualities that make a work "literary" are, on the one hand, its broad human appeal and, on the other, its charm of form and style.

But the historians of Jewish literature deal at length—indeed, they deal chiefly—with writings that have no literary quality at all. They were quite right to do so. Jewish life and Jewish culture could not be understood without taking note of all this unliterary literature. But the facts in the case must be recognized and understood. The ensuing reflections are a kind of prolegomenon to any future history of Jewish literature.

The merits of writings on scientific, historical, and philosophic subjects can be determined with some objectivity. But the evaluation of works of art—including literature—is a matter of taste. Not only do individuals differ in their likes and dislikes, but widely divergent

standards prevail in various times and places. To speak only of literature, oratory—so important in classical culture and in eighteenth century England—has virtually disappeared today. In the France of Bayle and Racine, as in tenth century Arab Spain, a good poet was one who was learned in the accepted rules; he did not have to say anything new, if only he expressed himself with elegance.<sup>1</sup> How different our expectation that a poet display individuality, compression, and intensity! And perhaps there is no parallel in the history of world literature to a present-day phenomenon: a novelist who fills his pages with obscenity is praised because he has an accurate ear for popular speech!

In the light of these familiar facts, we should note that today, as in past ages, the great Jewish classic, the Hebrew Bible, is generally regarded as superb art. Whenever men have considered its literary qualities at all, it has been with the highest praise. The Biblical writings have the warm human appeal, the clarity and power of expression, and the beauty of form which we have noted as the essential qualities of literature. We know now that this was not all as individual and spontaneous as we once thought. The Biblical writers drew on ancient near-eastern traditions of wisdom literature, liturgical poetry, and lamentation. But the Biblical specimens of these genres always equal, and often excel, other examples that have come to light.

The Bible also contains new kinds of writing. The brilliant court history of David is utterly unlike the royal chronicles of Egypt and Assyria. And the utterances of the prophets have no parallel in substance or in majesty of expression. Though the Bible was valued primarily as a work of divine revelation, for its religious and ethical insights, its beauty, as well, has been impressed on innumerable hearts and minds.

## II

We possess numerous writings contemporary with the latest books of the Bible, and others a century or two younger. Many of them imitate the style of a Biblical writing, sometimes—as in the case of the *Wisdom of Solomon*—with a measure of success. But most of the imitations are pallid; the *Psalms* of Qumran read better in Theodore Gaster's English version than they do in the original.

More or less cotemporary with these "outside books" were writings by Hellenistic Jews, who treated Jewish subject matter in florid post-classical Greek. By current standards, much of this material is wordy and pretentious, though there are moving and eloquent passages in Philo, and all these writings contain points of interest.

1. See the interesting Hebrew essay by Dan Pagis on "The Conception of Originality in the Hebrew Poetry of the Spanish Period," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. xxxvii.

During the same period—the last centuries before the Christian era—the basic prayers of the Synagogue were composed. Though later much revised and expanded, these prayers retained their original quality: they are in good, almost Biblical Hebrew; they are simple, direct, and free from sentimentality and from pretentious ornament; in structure they remind us of the parallelism of Biblical poetry.

The same age saw the emergence of a new kind of Hebrew. It was called “the language of the sages,” but it was no artificial scholastic jargon; it was a living tongue for centuries. It lacks the rugged grandeur of the Biblical idiom, but is simpler, more precise, and more convenient. It could have served as a vehicle for creative literary expression, but it did not. This is the second massive fact to be reckoned with: whereas the Bible is not only of basic religious importance, but also a literary treasure, the second great Jewish classic—the Talmudic-Midrashic corpus—is not literature at all in the usual sense of the word.

The men who created the Talmud were not oblivious of esthetic values. They made perceptive comments on the styles of various Biblical authors. They collected popular proverbs and coined arresting epigrams of their own. They employed pungent and colorful phrases. They composed beautiful prayers, and their laments for deceased colleagues were sometimes in poetic form and in virtually classic Hebrew. Their parables testify to delicate imagination and artistic talent. But the bits and pieces of this marvelous material were never integrated into a coherent work, comparable, say, to the Gospel of Matthew. The Mishnah, and still more the two Gemaras, are compilations of material preserved for its content alone, and put together without regard for normal literacy considerations. Later on, more ordered treatises were produced, but the bulk of Jewish writing was unliterary. This phenomenon is underscored by the few exceptions.

The first of these was the revival of liturgical poetry in post-Talmudic Palestine. The earliest examples (by Jose ben Jose and, to some extent by Yannai) seem to have drawn their inspiration from the Bible. The highly contrived forms devised by Kalir, and his cryptic, allusive style, reflect altogether new literary standards. (I suppose that we, brought up on the learned obscurities of T. S. Eliot, should be better able to appreciate Kalir, but it is not easy!)

In contrast to these writers who, according to their lights, sought to attain beauty of expression, most Jewish intellectuals of the period were concerned simply to clarify the truths of the Torah. They wrote Talmudic commentaries and compendia, and in responsa they applied Talmudic principles to the problems of their day. Later on, Saadia and others wrote also on theology and philosophy, often with apologetic or polemical intent. By that time, the influence of the flowering Arabic culture was plainly felt; it was manifest, not only in new subject

matter, but, also, in literary form and style. This was the second, and the most important, exception to the general statement we have made.

The Arab influence, first exerted on eastern Jewry, became dominant among the Jews of Moslem Spain. Jewish works on science, grammar, philosophy, even Biblical exegesis and halakhah, were written in the Arabic. But the amazing and impressive fact is that for poetry the Spanish Jews turned back to Hebrew.

We think of poetry as highly personal; it must, therefore, be written in the language we know best, the language of our inmost feelings. Yet it is unlikely that the Spanish Jews spoke Hebrew. True, liturgical pieces would not have been acceptable in any other language. But secular poetry, which was then something new and even suspect in Jewish life, was also composed in Hebrew.

The task of the Spanish poets was made more difficult by their acceptance of Arabic meters and stanza forms, and by the impact of Arabic literary standards, which (to our way of thinking) encouraged artificial and overly ingenious writing. Despite these difficulties, Gabirol and Halevi produced powerful and moving poems, and other writers, as well, created fine things. Also based on Arab models are the lighter works of Alḥarizi and Ibn Zabara, which rise only here and there above the level of entertainment.

Even from the Golden Age, there is little prose that we should describe as literary. The *Kuzari* has been characterized as a dialogue in Platonic style, and the first section does contain some dramatic give and take. But the rest of it is a not very exciting treatise, to which the dialogue form adds little or nothing. The great legal code of Maimonides, with its masterly arrangement and luminous style—here rabbinic Hebrew really comes into its own—is, in its less technical sections, very readable; so are some of the letters of Maimonides. (The *Guide* was deliberately planned to discourage the casual reader.)

Mention should also be made of popular romances, adapted from Oriental and European sources, and intended chiefly for the amusement of women. Such works were not regarded as serious "art," even by those who wrote them. Much Hebrew poetry was produced in Italy, chiefly on Spanish models. It is often deft, but little of it reveals poetic power. Immanuel of Rome seems to me overrated. Eventually, Renaissance influences appear in such Italian writers as Azariah dei Rossi, Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, and Leone Abrabanel.

But all these exceptions, though important, remain exceptions. Throughout the Middle Ages—which, for our purpose, extend almost to 1800—Jews produced innumerable books which were widely read, but which do not fit into the usual category of literature. The chief subject matter was law—annotations to the Talmud, treatises on special subjects, codes, liturgical compendia, collections of customs (*minhagim*).



A second area was that of Biblical studies. The third included philosophy, theology and mysticism, the number of works on Kabbalah being incredibly great. First rate minds wrestled with the problems of Jewish life and thought without concern for esthetic values. They would probably have considered such a concern frivolous.

The case of Rashi underscores this point dramatically. Here was a man with a genius for clear and endearing expression. Yet he employed his great literary talent only in writing commentaries to the Biblical and Talmudic texts, as well as brief practical responsa. He did not, it seems, feel the need to show what he could create.

### III

Modern Jewish literature is something altogether new. It is, first of all, multilingual. Not that all previous Jewish literature was in Hebrew. There is some Aramaic in the Bible and much in the Talmud. Jews had written extensively in Greek and in Arabic. But now, within the space of less than two centuries, we have significant Jewish writing in German, French, English, Russian, and other languages—plus the emergence of Yiddish as a medium for serious writing, as well as the revival of secular Hebrew.

This vast new literature reflects the outlook and norms of western culture. Jews write successively in the manner of the Enlightenment, of romanticism, of naturalism, of existentialism and surrealism, and so on. Though much of the new literature deals with issues of Jewish religious, national, and cultural rebirth, in nearly all of it Jewishness is somehow, and in some degree, "hyphenated."

New problems arise. What is Jewish literature? Does it have any distinctive characteristics, aside from Jewish subject matter? Does it include everything written in Hebrew and Yiddish, regardless of content? What about books written by Jews, which have no Jewish substance? What about effusions of Jewish self-hate? And what of books on Jewish themes written by informed and sympathetic Gentiles?

Even if we leave these questions unanswered for the present, we are aware that they do exist. Modern Jewish literature represents a radical break with the past. It is closely linked to the widespread rejection of the authority of Torah and its expositors. The gap resulting from this rejection has been partly filled by the western notion of the artist as seer.

The Greeks and Romans did regard the poet as inspired, as *vates*; such a distinction was not allowed to painters, sculptors, and musicians. And that was a long time ago. For Boileau and Pope, a good poet was a scholar who knew the rules and stuck to them. The concept of the artist as a medium of revelation seems to have been born, or reborn, in the romantic era. Shelley and Hugo, and, in a different way, Beet-

hoven, felt themselves called to bring a new vision to mankind. The concept of artist as seer outlasted romanticism. Mondrian regarded his paintings as the vehicle of a metaphysical message; Beckett and Penderecki are thought to speak significantly to our "condition." Jewish preachers and theologians find Torah in the utterances of Moses Herzog and Dr. Sammler, even though men like Saul Bellow do not seem to need guidance from the teachers of classic Torah. This phenomenon, too, needs further examination.

In short, we must note three chief areas of Jewish literature, which is not always literature in the conventional sense. In the Bible, Torah and art are often one and inseparable. In the rabbinic period, with certain exceptions, Torah is usually without art. In modern Jewish literature, art is primary and Torah problematical. It is on the basis of this division that we must establish our principles of criticism.



## A GREAT DICTIONARY FOR A GREAT LANGUAGE

*Review-Essay by* MORRIS LAUB\*

*Groyser verterbukh fun der yidisher shprakh* (The Great Dictionary of the Yiddish Language). Vol. III. Ed. by Yudel Mark. Yiddish Dictionary Committee, Inc. New York, 1971.

A Yiddish dictionary cannot be a translation of a non-Jewish dictionary. Every word should reflect the general aims set when creating the dictionary: not only a monument to the fallen and not even a monument to the more than 30 generations that spoke Yiddish, but also . . . an attempt at a special Yiddish dictionary, one with a Jewish soul. . . . Of all the various compliments that I received, the one I prize most is that from an old Leningrad professor. He visited with me, kept turning the pages of the dictionary and said: "You know, you have Yidelekh dancing around." I cherish such a formulation.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, a great hasid of the dictionary, who loves Yiddish and whom we immediately gave the first volume, told me (about his beginning to read the dictionary) . . .

. . . It so happens that the first words of Alef have no particular value. Words can be of clay, or they can be of gold and silver. So he reached the word *odom*, and when he found that *odom* means not only what it means, but is also an acronym for *ikh, dir, mir* (it's a folk expression),

---

\* Translations from entries in the dictionary and from Yudel Mark's article are mine. Translations from the Yiddish are in accordance with the YIVO recommendations, even of words transused from the Hebrew into Yiddish. Thus, a rabbinic scholar is, in Yiddish, a *talmid khokhem*, not a *talmid hakhām*; and the Yiddish proverb has it that *tofre iz di beste skhoyre*, and not *Toráh* or *sehoráh*.

---

MORRIS LAUB, director of the World Council of Synagogues, is a member of the administrative committee of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and is the president of the Sholom Aleichem Memorial Foundation, Inc.

he became a hasid of the dictionary. That's the kind of dictionary he wanted, where the people are, where its soul is...<sup>1</sup>

He who holds a dictionary in his hands must not only understand the words, he must feel the words, he must hear the words. A word has a sound, it has a taste, not only a meaning; in a certain sense a word often has color, too. Just as one can speak of local words, or general Jewish words, so one can speak of words that are blue, and words that are green. In any case, that's how I imagine them. And not only words—parts of words have their own life and characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

THESE WORDS OF YUDEL MARK, THE EDITOR OF the *Great Dictionary of the Yiddish Language*, indicate to some degree the special qualities that distinguish this dictionary. I have spent many an hour turning the pages of its first three volumes, and I have found them to live up to Mark's high standards.

Not only have I discovered the meaning of a given word, but I have also met quotations from old and new sources using the word, associative material and descriptions, all adding up to an encyclopedic detailing of the life style of Ashkenazi Jewry. The Leningrad professor was right, Yidelekh do dance around in the dictionary, and Heschel was right, it is a dictionary in which one finds the soul of the people.

The third volume, say the publishers in the English foreword, defines approximately 20,000 words.

All of these, as well as those of the fourth volume, still begin with the letter Alef, the first letter of the alphabet, and the first letter of about one third of all Yiddish words.<sup>3</sup> The completed project will therefore encompass twelve volumes rather than the originally anticipated ten volumes.

By this count, the dictionary, when complete, will contain over a quarter of a million words.

Jews don't know (says Mark) that Yiddish is one of the richest languages in the whole world . . . There is no Slavic language, including Russian, that can approach the riches of Yiddish. Yiddish has approximately as many words as Spanish, which is a very rich language, on many continents, with a colossal literature. English only is incomparable, for England was not only the empire that seized a fifth of the world, but English is a language that ingests every word heard or used, and certainly also every word written anywhere, even in a second rate publication, in a newspaper and so on.<sup>4</sup>

How does Yiddish come by such riches? Or, more accurately, what criteria determined the inclusion of a word? Mark says that as far back as 1937 he formulated a criterion:

1. "A Shmues mit Yudel Mark." *Di Goldene Keyt*, 18, 1973, pp. 39-40.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

3. The well-known quip bears repeating here. "Yiddish is a peculiar language. All words begin with Alef: a *tish*, a *mentsh*, a *kind*, a *seyfer*, a *feder*. . . ." Not true; only every third word begins with Alef.

4. "A Shmues mit Yudel Mark," p. 35.

"Every word that was used by a group of Jews when Jews think or speak Yiddish." Naturally, as in every formula, everything is well thought out. *Every word*, without discrimination. It must be used by a *group*; if an individual has a word peculiarly his (and there are such words belonging to one person only), it is not yet a word of the Yiddish language. It must be a group, no matter how small, even a tiny *shtetl*, even but a few people who have a wholly strange occupation in common. And even when one finds a word by a writer, quite a complicated one, if one can acknowledge that it has reached someone, then it has stuck somewhere. Further, when Jews think or speak Yiddish, there are three sorts of languages. The lowest degree is the written language. A much higher degree is the spoken language—the language that one thinks in. True Yiddish is what you think in Yiddish, and what you speak in Yiddish. If you think in Polish and speak Yiddish, it is not true Yiddish, though it can sound just like Yiddish.<sup>5</sup>

(If I may add a personal word: How do I know that I am at home in a language, and I speak five? When I dream in it. When in Israel, after a few days of renewed contact, I begin dreaming in Hebrew. Similarly, I knew that I knew French when after some months of living in Paris, I dreamed in French. I used to know German and dream in it. But when Germany became a nightmare, I stopped dreaming in it and I find it psychologically hard even to read it.)

Following this formula, *The Great Dictionary of the Yiddish Language* is a dictionary both of the literary tongue and the spoken word.

To me personally it is clear that the great strength of Yiddish is not Yiddish literature, despite her great poets and great narrators. The great strength of Yiddish was in its spokenness by millions, a living spokenness, a powerful spokenness—about which Bialik said: *Yiddish ret zikh*, Yiddish speaks itself. Everyone recognizes that the creator of new words is not just the scholar, the writer. Every simple speaker of Yiddish may be cast as a creator of Yiddish words, of Yiddish witticisms, of Yiddish proverbs, of everything that gave Yiddish its peculiar spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Bearing in mind the editor-in-chief's criteria and aims, let us dip into volume three. It runs from page 1097 to 1708, in triple columns, plus twenty-four pages of introduction, list of sponsors, list of collectors, abbreviations, and instructions on the ordering of words and how to use the dictionary. The 1836 columns cover the words *aynbi* to *opboy*.

The riches of Yiddish can perhaps be illustrated by two words, *in* and the Hebrew word fused into Yiddish, *cyn*. The definition of *in* as a word by itself (equals in English "in") is spread over four columns through 19 distinct meanings. This detailed analysis of the preposition is accompanied by idioms, citations and expressions which enlarge upon the bare meaning, and help the reader grasp its riches.

So much for the mere preposition. But 19 definitions do by no means exhaust the use of this tiny word, for it appears in a host of phrases, 190 by actual count.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Idioms are idioms are idioms, that is, they are idiosyncratic, unique to the language. Often they follow no logic and present enormous difficulties to the foreigner learning the language. But logic or no, they represent the very essence of the language, its special charm and mystique. Take a few with the Yiddish *in*. *In di yorn* as in *Ikh bin shoynt a meydle in di yorn*. (Literally, in years, "I am already a girl in years." The French would have it, *d'un certain age*.) *In dayn tatn*, a curse word, (May your father be possessed by an evil spirit). *In vaytn haldz (arayn)* used with the verb *zikh shemen*. It means to be ashamed, very much ashamed. Literally, it means to be ashamed into the far neck. The dictionary explains the idiom as indicating so much shame as to make not only the face to blush, but also the neck. *In trok* as in the expression, *hern in trok*, meaning, not obeying, disregarding completely. The dictionary adds that "Troch (is) a shtetl in the Vilna region with a large community of Karaites." Question: Is this why hearing *in Trok* means disregarding, namely, disregarding the Karaites? Or does it refer to Karaites disregarding the rabbinate? Or . . . — but as the Yiddish has it, *of a mayse fregt men nit kayn kashe*. Don't ask questions about a story. Similarly, don't try to figure out every idiom. It may be fun, but it will get you nowhere.

The comment given about the Karaites leads me to a special quality about Yiddish as the language of the *derekh hashas*. This is the term which Max Weinreich uses in describing the unique life style of Yiddishkeit and Judaism as reflected in Yiddish. He devotes an entire chapter, one of six in the first volume of his epoch-making history of the Yiddish language, to this language of the Jewish way of life.<sup>7</sup> And the dictionary, by detailing the words and idioms and their sources, shows us the very mirror in which the *derekh hashas* is reflected.

One is not through with *in* by reading its 19 definitions or studying its 190 phrases and idioms. *Alef, yud, nun*, the three letters that comprise *in* also can be read as *eyn*, derived from the Hebrew and fused into Yiddish. It is astonishing to see how many Hebrew phrases, idioms, quotations from Bible and Talmud, have been made at home in Yiddish. How many? 191, by actual count.

Again, a look at some may be instructive and reveal something unique about Yiddish. Here are two entries dealing with the same expression. *Eyno doyme shmiyo liriyo*.<sup>8</sup> Sentence. Scholarly. (*Kli Yakar*, Exodus 20, 16.) Cf. *Eyno doyme riyo lishmiyo*. Hearing is not seeing. "I saw—that's a witness." Proverb. Cf., "One eye is better (more credible)

7. *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh*. Four volumes. (N.Y.: Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 1973). Volumes III and IV contain the notes to the first two volumes. Volume III has a chapter of notes to the *derekh hashas* discussed in Volume I. The words *derekh hashas*, as Weinreich points out, are not original with him.

8. In Hebrew, one reads it as *Einah domah sh'miah lere'iah*.

than two ears." "Everyone knows that *Eyno doyme riyo lishmiyo*—hearing is not seeing." (*Yiddishes Folksblatt*, St. Petersburg, 1882, no. 15). "There is an ancient saying: *Eyno doyme riyo lishmiyo*—hearing is not seeing." (*Tog Morgn-Journal*, 1965, IX, 24).

*Eino doyme*—scholarly. 1. Phrase. "It's not equal." "A (marriage) match where there is a father an ornament (= a fine man), *eino doyme* to an orphan who is as lonely as a stone." (Isaac Halevi Levinsky, *The Unknown Beloved*, Warsaw, 1901.) 2. The beginning of a number of (Talmudic) sayings, as for example: *Eino doyme shoyne pirkoy meyo peomim leshoyne pirkoy meyo veakhas*<sup>9</sup> (*Hagigah* 9B). He who studies his *perek* (*shiyur*, lesson) a hundred times cannot be compared to him who studies it 101 times. That is, even when one knows something, it is still advantageous to study it again.

What do these entries tell us? a) The phrase is used by scholars and others given to scholars' jargon. b) The source—the exact page in the Talmud or in a commentary where it occurs, and if it occurs more than once, all sources are given. c) The meaning. d) Its meaning in proverbial form. e) Its appearance in modern sources, from the *Folksblatt* of St. Petersburg in 1882 to the *Tog-Morgen Journal* of New York in 1965, or in the works of a well known Yiddish writer. f) Its coupling with a Yiddish phrase, as if to buttress it.

The last is particularly instructive of the *derekh hashas*. Yes, the idea can be expressed in Yiddish alone, but the *gemara* citation lends force, not only because it brings scholarly witness to bear, but also because the *gemara* phrase is already part of the language, represents a Jewish life style, conferring Yiddishkeit upon the idea which, after all, is not unique in itself and can be applied to all peoples.

Parody and humor appear elsewhere. An eye for an eye is *Ayin takhas ayin*.<sup>10</sup> *Ayin* meaning "eye" is spelled with the letter ayin. But *ayin* may also be written with an alef and when thus spelled it means "nothing." So the entry in this volume, still on alef, reads:

*Ayin takhas ayin*. Phrase. Parodies *Ayin takhas ayin* (spelled with an ayin). "Nothing for nothing." (Humorous): "An author received for his book, sent to a colleague, a book in return with the inscription: *Ayin takhas ayin*."

*Eyn ester magedes*.<sup>11</sup> Sentence. Scholarly. Esther 2:20. "Esther had not yet revealed." Yehoash translation. (Second half: *moyladito ve-es amo*,<sup>12</sup> her descent and her people). 1. A hint about anyone who hides his descent, his Jewishness. "A Jewish teacher comes into the school and asks: Who knows Yiddish? All remain silent. *Eyn ester magedes*—deny-

9. In Hebrew: *Eino dome shoneh pirkoy meah peamim leshoneh pirkoy meah veahat*.

10. In Hebrew: *Ayin tahat ayin*.

11. In Hebrew: *Ein Esther magedet*.

12. In Hebrew *Moladitah ve-et ammah*.

ing (one's descent) has entered the blood." (Peretz, *Thoughts and Ideas*.) 2. Keeping a secret, not telling; remaining silent. "And she? Nothing. *Eyn ester magedes*. She plays dumb." (Sholom Aleichem, *Tevya*.) "*Eyn ester magedes*. He (she) plays dead." Folksaying. "*Eyn ester magedes*—clamming up and being quiet (literally—biting one's lips)." "*Eyn ester magedes*. My daughter Esther doesn't tell me with whom she went yesterday." Humorous Purim interpretation: "*Eyn ester magedes*. Esther was no reader for women (*zogerin* = one who reads the prayers aloud in the women's gallery for those who cannot read), no female preacher (*magidke*), she didn't preach any sermons."

Here in 30 narrow lines is a slice of modern Ashkenazic Jewish history. Hiding one's Jewishness out of fear; Purim Torah or parody; the role of the learned woman in the synagogue; parents and children and the eternal gap between them; the need to clam up and play dumb; Peretz and Sholom Aleichem. And the *derekh hashas*: the use of a Biblical phrase read in the Megillah on Purim which, because of the Haman story, became an occasion for joy, and thus for humor, and thus for parody, and thus for satire. "Esther is not a *magidke*." These words, in turn, bring to mind the *magid*, the itinerant preacher and his captive audience between *minha* and *maariv* in the *shtetl* synagogue, for who didn't daven *minha* and *maariv*?

But enough of *eyn*. *Iser*,<sup>13</sup> prohibition, begins with an alef and finds its way in 33 phrases from *iser akhile* to *iser tekhumin*.<sup>14</sup> All together, they make up a short course in Jewish law, minhag, and mores. Do you know what *iser-gelt* is? Here is the definition:

*Iser gelt*. Neuter. No plural. Money acquired by violating a prohibition. Money acquired through theft (*geneyve gelt*) or through robbery (*gezeyle gelt*). *Mit iser gelt farshpilt men di velt* (With *iser gelt* you lose the world). Proverb. "Don't borrow from him, because his money is *iser-gelt*." "He who doesn't want to benefit from *iser-gelt* is called a complete *tsadik*." (*Kav Hayashar*, Vilna, 5635, 161a.)

*Iser*, violation, in the realm of Ashkenazic Jewry, could be not merely or only a legal violation, but also an ethical one, and thus a phrase made up of two words becomes shorthand for another broad area of the *derekh hashas*.

And as a final illustration, see what is said about Elul.

*Elul*. Masculine. Plural *Eluls*. (Nehemiah 6:15.) 12th month of the Jewish year (counting from Tishri), or sixth (counting from Nisan). Elul is lacking (*Khoser*)<sup>15</sup> having 29 days. Its horoscopic sign is a *besulo*—a virgin. Occurs in August-September. Elul and Adar are called the two *kaleh* months; the study during the five previous months was con-

13. In Hebrew: *Issur*

14. In Hebrew: *Issur akhilah*, *issur tehumin*.

15. In Hebrew: *haser*.



cluded and one began to . . . review. Elul is a month of penance and soul-searching in preparation for the Days of Awe. (The sages interpreted Elul as an acronym—*Ani ledoydi vedoydi li* (Song of Songs 6:3)—I (belong) to my friend, and my friend—to me, as a symbol of closeness between man and God (*beyn odom lamokoym*).<sup>16</sup> Shofar is blown—*tekiyos reshus*<sup>17</sup>—from the second day of *Rosh Khoydesh* to *erev rosh hashono*. One says in the morning and evening—until *Shmini Atseres*—the psalm, *L'dovid hashem royi veyishi* (Psalm 27). When writing a letter one adds the greeting: *a ksive vekhsime toyve*.<sup>18</sup> It's the custom to visit the cemetery. One gets up early for *slikhes*<sup>19</sup> the last week of the month, or the Sunday of the former week, if Rosh Hashono falls on Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday. In some communities *slikhes* were said the whole month (*Baal Haturim*, Deut: 30,6.). "One should conduct oneself all year as in the month of Elul and Elul itself is surely Elul," Reb Israel Salanter. "On *rosh-khoydesh* Elul, even a fish in the water trembles." Proverb. (Based on *Shir Hashirim Rabbah*, 1,4). "The month of Elul passes, and the boss remains a boss." Proverb. "A whole year, one doesn't care what one does, but he who has the *pintele yid*<sup>20</sup> in him, becomes pious on *rosh-khoydesh* Elul." Folksong. *Rosh khoydesh Elul* is *rosh khoydesh bobek* (=fear). Folksaying (Galicia) "The month of Elul is . . . a time when the great fair ceases for boys: (in other words, when life has to become more serious—M.L.) (Mendele, *Vintshfingerl*.) "Perhaps he weeps because his hope is only Elul, the cemetery?" (Abraham Reisin, *My Return Home*.) "With the first . . . blast of the shofar . . . one heard . . . steady sighing and moaning, in accord with the tradition that the letters of Elul stand for *Oy li, vey li*." (Gershom Bader, *Yivo Bleter*, XXXIV.) "During the month of Elul there used to come to the *shtetl* book dealers who spread their wares: "*prayerbooks, siddurim, makhzorim, khumoshim, slikhes, tkhines, shofres, taleisim, and other sacred objects.*" (Z. Bzhostowiecki, *Yidishe Presse*, Antwerp, 1927.)

Here again in one entry are all the various elements that went into the makeup of Ashkenazic Jewry and that are reflected in the word Elul. Laws and customs, of course. How else define the meaning of Elul when each of these laws and customs became part of the life style of the Yiddish-speaking Jew for one whole month (or more) of the year? But the mere listing of laws is insufficient. Elul is a month of special psychological trauma—penance mixed with fear, with awe, with anticipation, with preparation, with hope. Elul affects everything, so it is right to

16. In Hebrew: *Bein adam lamokom*.

17. In Hebrew: *Tikiot reshut* (Permissive blasts).

18. In Hebrew: *Ketivah vahatimah tovah*.

19. In Hebrew: *Selihat*.

20. How do you translate *pintele yid*? A spark of Jewishness? A remnant of being a Jew? How catch the special flavor of the Yiddish?

quote the Baal Haturim, a medieval commentator, Jacob ben Asher, whose commentary usually appears in every *khumosh*, together with that of Rashi, and whose words were, therefore, read over and over again centuries later. And the humor and parody that accompany Ashkenazic Jewry touch even awesome Elul. So the acronym *Ani ledoydi vedoydi li* is transformed into *oy li vey li*, witty yet redolent of the special Elul aroma, parodic yet sensitive to the peculiar heaviness of heart one feels in Elul.

*The Great Dictionary of the Yiddish Language* is indeed great, not only in quantity but also in quality. It is a landmark in lexicography, worthy of taking its place beside the great national dictionaries of other languages.

On my shelf it is flanked by the *O.E.D.* It took 50 years to complete the latter. I hope that it will take a shorter time to complete this Yiddish dictionary. I have the space for it on my shelf. I can't wait to fill it . . . time is running out.

•

*Omission Noted:* In the Winter 1974 issue we printed a review of Arthur Ruppin's *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters*, but neglected to include the information that they were edited, with an Introduction, by Alex Bein, and that they were translated from the German by Karen Gershon.

**"KNOW WHAT TO ANSWER"**  
**JUDAISM and CHRISTIANITY:**  
**THE DIFFERENCES**

By Trude Weiss-Rosmarin

This authoritative yet popular presentation of the teachings and the differences of Judaism and Christianity is especially timely now when the "Jesus People" and the self-styled "Jesus Freaks" are very much into campus and youth activities and discussions.

*Judaism and Christianity* is widely used as a textbook in high school, college and adult study classes.

**\$2.75**

"I feel it is important that our youths receive authoritative analysis of the differences between Judaism and Christianity. I find Trude Weiss-Rosmarin's JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY: THE DIFFERENCES to be the best available book, and I am sending it to the 215 college youths of our congregation. Rather than bombard them with propaganda, it is important to arm them with facts and knowledge."

—Dr. Joseph P. Sternstein  
Rabbi, Temple Beth Shalom  
Roslyn Heights, N.Y.

Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin's book is an important volume . . . It deserves a very wide reading.

—*Jewish Social Studies*

True to its title, this book contains a succinct statement of what it is in the essential Christian faith that a scholarly Jew does not accept.

—*New York Times*

It is refreshing to have a Jewish scholar write so frankly about "the eternal and fundamental differences between Judaism and Christianity."

—*The Protestant*

**ORDER BLANK**

Jewish Spectator, 250 West 57th St., New York, N. Y. 10019

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copy(ies) of JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY: THE DIFFERENCES for \$2.75 a copy (\$2.50 a copy for a minimum of 20 copies). My check for \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

IMPORTANT: Please add 25c for books to be shipped abroad, including, Canada. Kindly note that paperbacks CANNOT be billed.

# BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

## JUDAISM PRICE LIST

Vol.	Year	ISSUES AVAILABLE	Price Per Issue
1	1952	*, 2, 3, *	\$ 1.00
2	1953	*, *, 3, *	1.00
3	1954	1, *, 3, *	1.00
4	1955	1, 2, *, 4	1.00
5	1956	*, 2, 3, *	1.00
6	1957	1, 2, 3, 4	1.00
7	1958	1, *, *, *	1.00
8	1959	1, *, *, 4	1.00
9	1960	*, 2, *, 4	1.00
10	1961	1, 2, 3, 4	1.00
11	1962	1, 2, 3, 4	1.00
12	1963	*, 2, 3, 4	1.25
13	1964	1, 2, 3, 4	1.25
14	1965	1, 2, 3, 4	1.25
15	1966	*, *, 3, 4	1.25
16	1967	1, 2, *, 4	1.50
17	1968	1, 2, *, 4	1.50
18	1969	1, 2, 3, 4	1.75
19	1970	*, 2, 3, 4	1.75
20	1971	*, 2, 3, 4	2.25
21	1972	1, 2, *, 4	2.25
22	1973	1, 2, 3, 4	2.25
23	1974	1, 2,	2.25

For orders outside the United States and Canada, add \$0.25 per issue for postage.

Issues marked with an asterisk (\*) are out of print.

*A complete set of JUDAISM is now available on microfilm. Anyone interested should contact:*

XEROX UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS  
300 North Zeeb Road  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

# JUDAISM

\$2.25

SUMMER 197

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED